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MARY JANE'S CITY HOME

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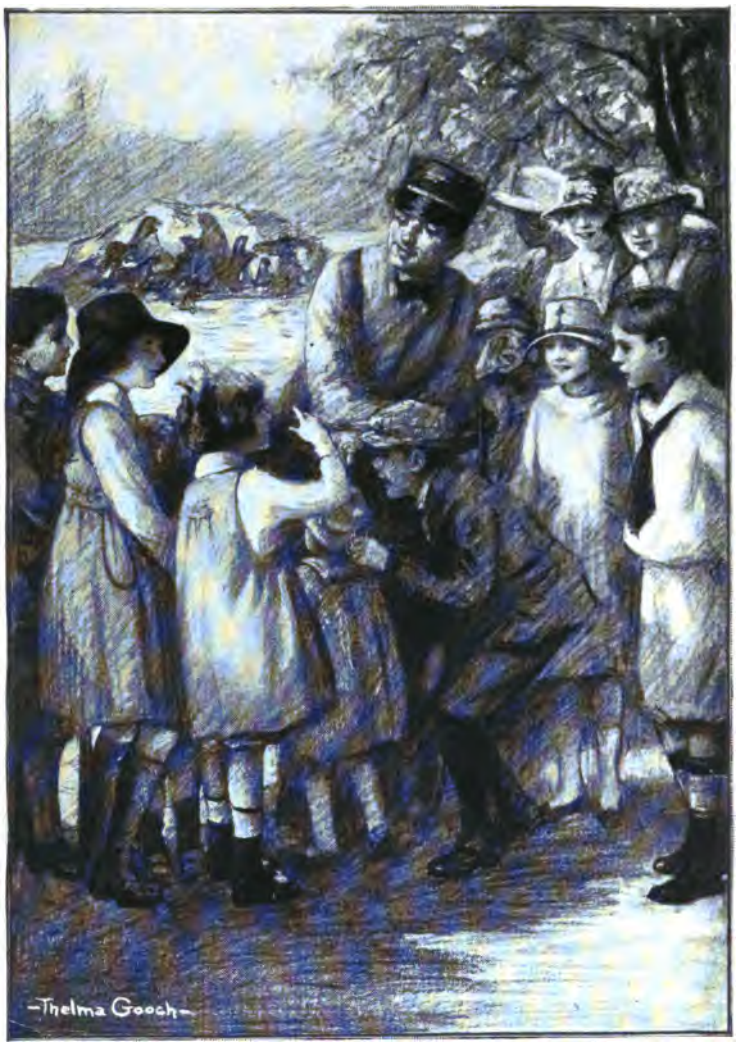

And she pointed out the little seal who was a bit too slow. Frontispiece

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MARY JANE'S CITY HOME

BY

CLARA INGRAM JUDSON

AUTHOR OF

"MARY JANE—HER BOOK," "MARY JANE—HER VISIT," "MARY JANE'S KINDERGARTEN," "MARY JANE DOWN SOUTH," "MARY JANE IN NEW ENGLAND," ETC.

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TO
MY MOTHER AND FATHER

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Finding the New Home	11
The Folks Around the Corner	22
Visiting with Betty	35
Sand Castles	49
The Beach Supper	64
Mary Jane Goes Shopping	76
The Bus Ride	88
The Birthday Luncheon	100
Lost—One Doll Cart	115
A Trip to the Zoo	128
A Day in the Parks	143
Visitors, and a Boat Ride	156
School Begins	171
Christmas in Chicago	184
A Summer Home—and a Telegram	201

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ILLUSTRATIONS

And she pointed out the little seal who was a bit too slow . . . . . *Frontispiece*

PAGE

And then, sliding in the wet sand, she sat right down in the lake and sent a wave of ripples right over her castle 61

"But it's all down my dress," said Mary Jane, trying her very best not to cry 111

This year, seeing Mary Jane was such a *very* old person, she was allowed to put the gold star on the top of the tree 195

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MARY JANE'S CITY HOME

FINDING THE NEW HOME

THE late afternoon sunshine sent its slanting, golden rays through the car windows on to the map that Mary Jane and her sister Alice had spread out on the table between the seats of the Pullman in which they were riding.

"And all that wiggly line is water?" Mary Jane was asking.

"Every bit water," replied their father, who bent over their heads to explain what they were looking at; "a lot of water, you see. You remember I told you that Chicago is right on the edge of Lake Michigan. And Lake Michigan, so far as looks are concerned, might just as well be the ocean you saw down

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in Florida—it's so big you can't see the other side."

"And does it have big waves?" asked Mary Jane.

"Just you wait and see," promised Mr. Merrill. "Big waves! I should say it has!"

"And all the green part of the map is parks," said Alice, quoting what her father had told them when he first showed them the map.

"Then there must be a lot of parks," suggested Mary Jane with interest. "I think I'd like to live by a park," she added thoughtfully.

"I think I should too," agreed Mr. Merrill, "and it's near a park we will make the first hunt for a home."

"Oh, look!" cried Mary Jane suddenly as she glanced up from the spread-out map; "what's that, Dadah?"

"That's the beginning of Chicago," said Mr. Merrill. "Let's fold up the map now and see what we can of the city. This is South Chicago; and those great stacks and

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flaming chimneys are steel mills and foundries and factories—watch now! There are more!"

The train on which the Merrill family were traveling went dashing past factory after factory—past an occasional open space where they could see in the distance the blue gleam of Lake Michigan and past great wide stretches where tracks and more tracks on which freight cars and engines sped up and down showed them something of the whirling industry that has made South Chicago famous. No wonder it was a strange sight to the two girls—they had never before seen anything that made them even guess the big business that they now saw spread out before them.

They had spent all their lives thus far—Alice was twelve and Mary Jane going on six—in a small city of the Middle West and though they had had a fine summer in the country visiting grandma and grandpa and had only the winter before taken a beautiful trip through Florida, they had never been to a great city. And now they were not go-

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ing to visit or to take a trip. They were going to live there. The great big city of Chicago was to be their home.

The pretty little house they had loved so well was sold. The furniture and books and dolls and clothes were all packed and loaded on a freight car to follow them to the city and all the dear friends had been given a farewell. Mary Jane had loved the excitement and muss of packing; the great boxes and the masses of crinkly excelsior and the workmen around who always had time for a pleasant joke with an interested little girl. But when it came time to say good-by to Doris and to her much loved kindergarten and to all the boys and girls in school and "on her block," going away wasn't so funny. In fact, Mary Jane felt a queer and troublesome lump in her throat most of the morning when the good-bys were said.

But the ride on the train (and how Mary Jane did love to ride on the train); and the nice luncheon on the diner (and how Mary Jane did *adore* eating on a diner—hashed

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brown potatoes, a whole order by herself and ice cream and everything!); and then father's nice talk about all the fun they were going to have, made the lump vanish and in its place there developed an eager desire to see the new city and to begin all the promised fun. It was then that Mr. Merrill showed them the big map of the city and pointed out the part of the city where they would likely live.

As the girls watched, the great factories and foundries slipped away into the distance, and in their place the girls could see houses and occasional stores and here and there a station, past which their train dashed as though it wasn't looking for stations to-day, thank you.

"Don't we stop anywhere?" asked Mary Jane after she had counted three of these little stations.

"Those are suburban stations," explained Mr. Merrill, "and a big through train like ours hasn't time to stop at every one. Pretty soon another train will come along and stop at each one of those we are now

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passing so don't you worry about folks getting left. *This* train we are on has got to get us into Chicago in time for dinner."

And just at that minute, when the big three story apartment buildings that looked so very queer and strange to Mary Jane, began to fill every block, the porter came to brush her off and to help her on with her coat.

"I'm going to live here in Chicago," she said to him as he held the coat for her, "and it's a big place with lots of lake and parks and—houses, I guess, and most everything."

"'Deed it is big, missy," replied the porter, "and I hope you's going to like it a lot, I do."

"I'm a-going to," answered Mary Jane confidently, as she picked up Georgiannamore and Georgiannamore's suit case which at the last moment couldn't possibly be packed in the trunk, and followed her father and mother down the aisle, "'cause mother and Dadah and Alice are going to live here too and we always have fun."

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Mr. and Mrs. Merrill had decided to get off at one of the larger suburban stations and spend a few days in a near by hotel; they thought the comparative quiet of a residence hotel would be better for their girls than the flurry and hurry of a big down town hotel. But to Mary Jane, accustomed to the sights and sounds of a small city where street cars went dignifiedly past every fifteen minutes and where traffic "cops" would have very few duties, the confusion she found herself in was quite enough to be very interesting.

They stepped off the train, walked down some stairs and found themselves on the sidewalk of a very busy street. Overhead the noise of their own train rumbling city-ward made a terrific din; and as though that were not enough, still higher up the great elevated car line made a rumble and roar. Mary Jane craned her neck as they walked from under the trains and there high in the air, she saw street cars running along as though street cars always had and always would, run on tracks high up in the air!

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"Can we ride on it, Dadah?" she shouted to her father, "are we going to ride on that train up on stilts?"

Mr. Merrill shook his head laughingly and hurried them into a waiting taxi.

"We're not going to ride there to-day," he explained when the door of the car shut out some of the noise, "but some day soon we'll take a long ride on the elevated and then you can see all the back yards and back porches and parks and streets and everything about the city, just as plain as plain can be."

While he was talking, the Merrills drove through streets lined on both sides with three-story apartment buildings. But before Mary Jane had time to ask a question or even think what she would like to say, they whisked around a corner and out into the beautiful wide driveway on the Midway—the long, green parkway that stretched, or so it seemed to Mary Jane, for miles in both directions. The taxi pulled up in front of a comfortable looking hotel right on the side of the park and Mary Jane wasn't a bit sorry

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to get out and take a breath of fresh air and look at the lovely view before her.

"Now just as soon as you are washed up," said Mrs. Merrill, briskly, as they went into the hotel, "you and Alice may come out onto this nice porch and watch the children play on the Midway and get a little run before dinner."

You may be sure that with that promise before her, Mary Jane didn't take very long to primp. She had spied a group of children about her age, who seemed to be having a beautiful time playing ball out there on the grass and she couldn't help noticing that they played just as she and Doris did and she couldn't help wishing that she too, even though she was a new little girl just come to town, could play with them. So she stood very still while Mrs. Merrill tied the fresh hair bow and slipped on a clean frock and then, holding tight to big sister Alice's friendly hand she went down the one flight of stairs—she was in far too big a hurry to wait for the elevator—and out on to the long roomy porch.

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Just across the narrow street in front of the hotel and on the nearest bit of parkway, three little girls about Mary Jane's age were still playing ball. One was dainty and small and had yellow curls; one was rather tall and had long straight dark hair and the third had dark, straight hair bobbed short, and snapping black eyes.

"Wouldn't it be funny," said Mary Jane as she looked at them wistfully, "if I'd get to know those girls and they'd be friends. If I *did*," she added, "I think she'd be my mostest friend," and Mary Jane pointed to the little girl with the dark, bobbed hair.

While they watched and were trying to get up courage to go over and play too, a pretty girl about Alice's age came along the street. Her hair was copper colored and curly and very, very pretty. And her smile when she saw the little girls who were playing, made her seem so friendly and "homey."

"I've been hunting you, Betty," she said to the little girl Mary Jane liked best. "It's time to come home for dinner."

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So the four girls, three little folks and one bigger one, went around the corner toward home, and two strangers, standing on the porch, watched them till they were quite out of sight.

"It would be funny," said Alice, "if we'd ever get to know them. I'm sure I'd like to."

"Wouldn't it though!" exclaimed Mary Jane. "I hope we do!"

And all the time they were eating their first dinner in Chicago, and telling mother and father about the children they had seen and making plans about what to do to-morrow, they were thinking about those two girls and wishing to know them better.

Little did they guess what would really truly happen before the week was over!

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THE FOLKS AROUND THE CORNER

THREE whole days of flat hunting! And of all the fun she had ever had in her more than five years of life, Mary Jane thought flat hunting in Chicago was the most fun of all! She loved the mystery of each new apartment; the guessing which room might be hers and which mother's; the hunting up the door bell and hearing its sound (for as you very well know each door bell has a sound of its own); the poking into closets and pantries and porches. It was the most delightful sort of exploring she had ever come across and she couldn't at all understand why mother and father got tired and somewhat discouraged. For *her* part Mary Jane was tempted to wish that they would never find a flat, well hardly that; but that finding the right one would take a long, oh, a very long time!

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But by the afternoon of the third day, her legs began to get a little tired too, and her eyes looked more often to the green of the Midway they occasionally saw and she thought that flats, even empty flats, really should have chairs for folks to sit on. So, as a matter of fact, she wasn't half as sorry as she had thought she would be, when, on the afternoon of the third day of hunting the Merrill family came across a charming little apartment.

It was on the second floor of a very attractive red brick building; it had five rooms, quite too small, father thought, but then one can't have everything, they had found, and every room was light and sunny and cheerful. But the part about it that Mary Jane and Alice liked the best was the back porch. To be sure there was a front porch, a pretty, little porch with a stone railing and a view way down the street toward the park and lake. But off the dining room the girls discovered a small balcony that overlooked the back yard next door, a back yard that had a garden laid out and a chicken house and

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everything so homey and comfortable looking that the girls immediately wanted to sit out and watch.

"I think if we'd stay here maybe some children would come out to play," suggested Mary Jane in a whisper.

"I think they would, too," agreed Alice. "And I think if we lived here maybe we could get acquainted and play with them."

"Let's live here!" exclaimed Mary Jane and she ran back into the house just at the very minute Mr. and Mrs. Merrill decided to rent the apartment.

"So you think you'll like it, do you?" said Mrs. Merrill, smiling; "the rooms are pretty small."

"I know we'll love it," said Alice eagerly, "and you should see the back porch."

But Mr. Merrill laughed when they showed him the porch.

"Do you call this a porch," he exclaimed, "why it's not half big enough for a porch! I'd call it a balcony."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Merrill, "and then when you watch folks in the yard down

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there,—for you *are* planning to watch and get acquainted, aren't you?—then you can pretend that this is your balcony seat and that the folks down there are in a play for you—wouldn't that be fun?"

The girls thought it would, but there was so much to plan and think about that they didn't stay on their little balcony any longer just then, which was something of a pity, for right after they went indoors, somebody came out into the yard— But then, there's no use telling about *her* for Mary Jane didn't see her.

So Mary Jane and Alice went with their father and mother into the room that was to be theirs and they planned just where each bed should be and where was the best place for the desk and dressing table and who should have which side of the closet. And by that time, it was nearly six o'clock —time to go back to the hotel for dinner.

Mr. Merrill stopped at the desk for mail as they went up to their room and there he found a message telling him that their furniture had arrived in Chicago and that it must

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be taken out of the freight house the next morning.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill with a gasp of dismay, "I think it's a good thing we found that flat! What ever would we have done if we hadn't! Well, girls, I think we'd better eat a good dinner and then go to bed early for we'll have to get down there and clean up the flat while father tends to getting our things delivered."

So bright and early the next morning everybody started to work. Mr. Merrill went down town to meet the moving men he had engaged by 'phone and Mrs. Merrill and the two girls put aprons and cleaning rags and soap, all of which they had brought in their small trunk, into a little grip and went down to the new home.

Mary Jane had lots of fun that morning. First she went down to the basement and borrowed a broom from the janitor. Then she went back for clean papers which she folded neatly and spread on the pantry shelves which Mrs. Merrill with the good help of the janitor's wife had cleaned

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and ready. Then she put papers on the shelf of the closet she and Alice were to share and papers in the drawers near the floor of that same closet. By that time—it takes pretty long to fold papers neatly and get every bit of the shelf covered, you know—the door bell rang—a great, long, hard ring.

"Oh, dear! Can you go, Mary Jane?" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill, "Alice and I both have wet hands!" You see, Alice had been washing mirrors that were on the closet doors while her mother and the janitor's wife did windows and wood work.

"Yes, I'm dry," said Mary Jane, "and my papers are done and I'd like to go."

To tell the honest truth, Mary Jane had just that very minute been wishing the door bell would ring. For the janitor's wife had showed her how to press the buzzer that would release the lock of the front door and let a person come up the stairs. And of course Mary Jane wanted to try it. So she hurried over to the house 'phone, took down the receiver and said, "Who is it?" just as any grown-up person would.

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"Here's your things!" said a gruff voice, "we'll bring 'em up the back!"

Mary Jane didn't stop to press any buzzer. She dashed over to the window nearest the alley and there, sure enough, was a great big moving van and it was piled up full of boxes and barrels and crates—all the things that Mary Jane had watched the packing of only such a few days before. Talk about fun! Moving was surely the best sport ever!

Mary Jane stayed at the window watching till the men brought the first load up. Then they announced that they were going for lunch and Mrs. Merrill said she and the girls had better eat while the men were away. So hastily putting on wraps, they went over to a small tea room only a few doors away, where they had a tasty little luncheon so quickly served that they easily got back to their flat before the moving men arrived again.

How that afternoon went, Mary Jane never quite remembered. It was one long succession of excitement and fun. The un-

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packing of boxes and crates, the piling up of rubbish, the finding of cherished belongings and putting them where they belonged in the new home, and the gradual change of the living room from a mess of boxes to a place that might some day really look like home, all seemed thrillingly interesting to a little girl who had never moved before.

But by half past four or thereabouts, even Mary Jane began to get a little tired.

"I'll tell you something to do," suggested Mrs. Merrill, when a pause in her own work give her a chance to notice that Mary Jane was getting flushed and tired. "Here is a box of doll things I have just come across. Suppose you take them out into your own little balcony and sort them over. Put in this box (and she handed her a little box) all the things you must surely have upstairs; and leave in the big box all the things you will be willing to put in the store room. Now take your time, dear, and sit down while you work."

Mary Jane was very glad for that advice. For even though moving men are wonderful

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to watch, and even though rubbish and boxes and barrels are all very fascinating, a person *does* get tired and sitting down isn't at all a bad idea.

One of the men who was unpacking gave her her own little chair that he had just uncrated and so she sat down in state, in her own chair, on her own balcony and opened the box of doll things. But that's every bit that got done to those doll things that day, every bit.

For at that very minute, who should come out of the house around the corner, the house with the back yard and garden and chickens and everything, but—yes, you must have guessed it—the same two girls that Alice and Mary Jane had seen on the Midway the day they arrived in Chicago. Think of that! Right under Mary Jane's own balcony and, moreover, it was plain to see that they lived there.

"Now I guess we'll get to know them," whispered Mary Jane to herself happily. But of course, she didn't say a thing out loud. She only sat very still and watched.

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And as she watched, two boys came out on the back porch of the house around the corner and one of the boys called, "Say, Fran, did you feed the chickens?"

The girl who was about Alice's age answered back, "No I didn't, Ed, I thought it was Betty's turn to-day."

"Now I know a lot," Mary Jane whispered to herself. "She's Frances, I'm sure, and he's Ed; and Betty must be the little girl that's 'bout as big as me."

Just then, when Mary Jane was wishing and wishing and wishing that she would come, Alice came to the door of the balcony and looked out.

"Sh-h-h!" whispered Mary Jane, tensely, "they're here, both of 'em, and there's more of 'em, too!"

Alice seemed to understand exactly what Mary Jane meant, even though her sentence was decidedly mixed up, and she stepped out onto the balcony.

Frances heard the door shut and looked up. For a long minute the two girls looked at each other, then Frances, the girl with

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the auburn hair and the friendly smile, nodded shyly.

Little Betty didn't take long deciding what she would do. She called eagerly, "Moving in?"

"Yes, we are," laughed Alice, waving her hand toward the piles of boxes and rubbish stacked up on the back stairs of the building.

Ed, who had started back into the house, looked around and, seeing his sisters had made a small start toward conversation, called a question on his own responsibility.

"Going to use 'em all?" he asked, pointing to the boxes.

"Dear me, I guess not," said Alice. "I don't see how we could!"

"Then will you give me a box?" he asked, running back in the yard till he stood right under the balcony. "We're going to get some rabbits, John and I are, and we want a box for their home."

"Come on over and see which one you want," suggested Alice, "and I'll ask father."

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Ed and his brother John lost no time climbing over the fence and inspecting the boxes. By the time Alice brought Mr. Merrill, he had picked out just the one he wanted and was very grateful when it was given him for his own.

"Don't you want to come over and see 'em make the rabbit house?" suggested Frances shyly. "Oh, maybe you're busy."

"I'm sure we can come," replied Alice, "because mother just told me she wished we'd get some fresh air." So Alice and Mary followed the others to the back yard and helped hold nails and boards and make the rabbit house. When it was nearly finished the children's mother, who proved to be very charming Mrs. Holden, came out with a plate of cookies and a welcome for the two little strangers.

"Thank you for the cookies," said Mary Jane politely, "but we're not strange—that is, not any more, we aren't, we know each other—all of us do!"

And so it really seemed to all the children. They were friends from the first day and

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making the rabbit house was just the beginning of many nice times in that friendly back yard.

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VISITING WITH BETTY

THREE days of hard work for everybody and then the little flat into which the Merrills had moved began to look like a real home. The unpacking was all done and the rubbish cleared away; the furniture was polished and set in place; the closets were in order and every cupboard and shelf held just the right things for comfort. It wasn't such an easy matter to stow away all the things the Merrills had used in their pretty house—the five room apartment was much smaller than the house of course—but with everybody's help the job was done.

"Now then," said Mrs. Merrill, happily, in the late afternoon of the third day, "if you'll run the rods in these curtains, Mary Jane, I'll hang them up where they belong and then we'll all three go to market and then—guess what? We'll have dinner in our own new home!"

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Mary Jane thought that would be fun, for, much as she loved eating in the hotel where they had been living while getting the new home fixed, she liked better to eat her mother's cooking. So it was a very happy little girl who slipped the rods into the living room curtains and then put on her hat and hunted up the market basket from the pantry.

Now many times before this, Mary Jane had been marketing with her mother. But never had she been to such a market! Before, marketing meant going to the grocery store about three blocks from their home; it meant talking to the very interested and friendly grocer who had known Mary Jane ever since she first appeared at the grocery in her big, well-covered cab—she was then about two months old; it meant telling Mr. Shover, the grocer, just what they wanted and picking out the sorts of things they liked best. But marketing in Chicago was very different. In the first place there wasn't a person around they had ever seen before; and then everything was so big and

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there was so much food. Mary Jane thought there couldn't possibly be enough folks in Chicago to eat all those good things! But when she and her mother actually got into the store and began to buy, Mary Jane forgot all about the strangeness and remembered only the fun. For they didn't get somebody to wait on them as they used to at Mr. Shover's—not at all! They waited on themselves! They went through a little turnstile and then wandered around among the good things all by themselves and they took down from the well-stocked shelves anything they wanted. It certainly was queer.

"Can we just take *anything?*" exclaimed Mary Jane in amazement as her mother explained what they were to do.

"Well," laughed Mrs. Merrill, "you must remember we have to pay for things just the same as we used to at Mr. Shover's. But we can take anything we want—if we pay for it."

"Then I'll pick you out some good things to eat, mother!" cried Mary Jane happily,

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"don't you worry about thinking what we're going to have!"

Now Mary Jane really did know how to read, at least a little, but she didn't stop to read on this important occasion. She looked at the pictures on the cans of goodies and she picked out a can of all her favorites and set them in the basket Mrs. Merrill carried on her arm. But that didn't work, for Mrs. Merrill had a long list and the basket wouldn't hold only so much. So they decided to let Mrs. Merrill pick out three things from her list and then Mary Jane could buy one favorite; then three more things from the list and then another favorite. That proved to be great fun and it certainly did fill the basket in a hurry! Mary Jane was just trying to decide between a box of marshmellows and a pan of nice, goo-y sugary sweet rolls when Mrs. Merrill said, "which ever you decide, Mary Jane, you'll have to carry the bundle yourself, because this basket won't hold another parcel —not even a little one."

Mary Jane decided on the rolls and she

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took them over to the counter to have them wrapped up and there she almost bumped into—Betty Holden, no less! Betty and her mother were shopping too, and their basket was almost as full as Mrs. Merrill's.

"We market after school," said Mrs. Holden, "and then Ed brings his wagon to meet us and hauls the stuff home. We'll get him to give you a lift too."

"And then can Mary Jane come over to our house to play?" asked Betty.

"For a little while," agreed Mrs. Merrill, smilingly, "but she won't want to stay very long to-day because we're going to have our first dinner in our new home and she's promised to help me lots—and I need it."

Just then they spied Ed's face at the door so they hurried through the second turnstile, paid for their groceries and left the store. Ed's wagon proved to be very big and he was glad to give them plenty of room for the Merrill basket.

"Are you going to start in school to-morrow?" asked Betty as they walked off toward home.

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"I'm going over to see about that to-morrow morning," said Mrs. Merrill. "We've been so busy unpacking and settling that we haven't even thought about it till now. Do you like your school, Betty?"

"Yes, I do, lots!" exclaimed Betty heartily. "I'm just through kindergarten this spring, I am, and next fall I'm first year."

"Then I think you must be just about where Mary Jane will be," said Mrs. Merrill.

The two little girls ran skipping ahead, talking about what they would do and where they would sit and all the things that girls plan for school.

But when Mrs. Merrill took Alice and Mary Jane over the next morning, it didn't work out as planned. Alice was entered and found herself in the very same room and only two seats away from Frances, which seemed perfect. But there wasn't room for Mary Jane! The kindergarten was crowded, very, very crowded, and new little folks weren't allowed to come in. Miss Gilbert, the teacher, talked with Mary Jane a

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while and Mary Jane told her all the work she had done and all the things she had learned about.

"I really think, Mrs. Merrill," said the teacher finally, "that your little girl is ready for the first grade. She seems very well prepared. But they don't take new first graders so late in the year. Why don't you keep her out of school the rest of this term and then next year, enter her in the first grade?"

Mrs. Merrill thought that was a fine plan. There would be so many new sights to see and things to learn in the city that Mary Jane would find plenty to do.

But Mary Jane was keenly disappointed. "I wanted to stay in Betty's room," she explained to the teacher. "She asked me to sit by her this morning, she did, and I promised yes I would."

"Then I'll tell you what you may do," suggested the teacher kindly. "Two of our folks are absent this morning so we have enough chairs to go around. Wouldn't you like to stay with Betty and visit? And

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then just a little before time for school to be out, Betty can take you up to your sister's room and she can bring you home."

Mrs. Merrill agreed that that was a fine plan, so Mary Jane went to the cloak room to hang up her hat and her mother hurried back home.

At first Mary Jane felt very strange in the new school room. There were so many children there and the songs were new and the games were new and everything seemed different. She almost—not really, but *almost*—wished she had gone home with her mother. And then, after singing three songs Mary Jane didn't know, the children made a big circle and let Mary Jane stand in the middle and they sang the song Mary Jane knew so very well,

"I went to visit a friend to-day,
She only lives across the way,
She said she couldn't come out to play
Because it was her ——"

Quick as a flash Mary Jane dropped onto

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her knees and began to act out packing things into a box.

For a minute the children hesitated. That was a strange thing to be acting; Mary Jane was not washing or ironing or churning or sweeping or any of the things the children usually acted and they were all puzzled. Then suddenly Betty remembered the back stairway and all the piles of boxes and excelsior on Mary Jane's back stairway and she called out the end of the song—"because it was her moving day!" And everybody finished the verse with a flourish.

After that Mary Jane felt more at home and the morning went oh, so very quickly, till recess time, when they all went out into the big yard to play in the sunshine.

Betty and her particular friends were gathering together for a circle game in the corner of the yard when Mary Jane heard a soft, helpless little sound close at hand. Without stopping to say anything to any one, she ran over to the fence and there,

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caught in between the tall iron bars, was the tiniest, blackest little dog she had ever seen. He evidently had seen the children coming out to play, had wanted to play with them and had supposed he could slip right through between the bars of the fence.

Mary Jane tried to pull him out but he was stuck fast. So she called Betty.

"Here!" shouted one of the boys, "I'll pull him out!"

"No you don't," cried Betty imperatively, "you let him alone! We'll do it!" And her snapping black eyes flashed so positively that the boy obeyed. But Betty couldn't pull the dog through either, the bars were too close, she couldn't move him either way.

"I'll tell you what let's do," she said. "Mary Jane, you stay here and guard him so nobody tries to pull him out and I'll go and get Tom and he'll know what to do." Tom was the janitor.

Mary Jane stood close by the dog and patted his head and talked kindly to him so he would know somebody was trying to help him. And all the girls and boys who had

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started to play together gathered around and watched Mary Jane while Betty ran back to the school building and down into the basement to fetch the janitor.

Fortunately, Tom was in his office and came quickly in response to Betty's call. He saw at once what the trouble was and discovered a way to remedy it. It seems that the big iron bars that made the fence were heavier at the bottom than nearer the top, so the space between the bars got wider higher up. Tom took firm hold of the wiggling little creature and gently but very firmly pushed him straight up between the bars. That didn't hurt like trying to pull him out, so the dog stopped barking and whining. And in a second Tom had him out—half way up the fence there was plenty of room to lift him right through.

Poor little doggie! He was so glad to be out and so frightened by his experience that when Tom laid him down on the grass he looked quite forlorn. Mary Jane sat down beside him and gathered him up into her arms.

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"Don't you be afraid, doggie," she said softly, "we'll take care of you, don't you be afraid a bit!"

"What you going to do with him?" asked one of the girls.

But Mary Jane didn't have to answer that question. Before she could speak, a small boy came running along the street, crying as hard as he could cry and shouting between sobs, "I've lost my dog! I've lost my dog! Somebody's stole my dog!"

"No they haven't," called Betty, "maybe this is yours!"

The little boy rubbed his eyes, looked through the fence—and a look of happiness spread over his small face.

"It's him! It's him! It's him!" he shouted happily, "then he isn't stole!"

It took only a minute to run around the gate, dash across the school yard and grab the tiny little dog into his arms. And the children could tell by the way the little creature snuggled down that the love wasn't all on one side—evidently the little boy was a good master.

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Right at that minute, before there was a chance to start a game or any play, a great bell in the school doorway began to ring. Mary Jane was used to a small school of course—a school so small that the teacher came to the window and simply called when recess was over. So she stared in amazemen when the great bell rang out so noisily.

"Come on!" shouted Betty, "recess is over!"

"Soon as I tell this doggie good-by!" replied Mary Jane.

Betty didn't hear and, supposing Mary Jane was right behind her, she went on into her place in line. And Mary Jane, remembering how leisurely folks went up after recess at her old school, didn't pay any attention to the rapidly forming lines. She turned around and patted the tiny dog and nodded and smiled and whispered her good-by.

When she did turn to go in with Betty, she was amazed to see all the children had disappeared into the building. She scampered over to the door as fast as ever she could.

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And up the stairs—but not a soul did she see! Only the click of a closing door could be heard—a click that made Mary Jane feel really shut out and lonely.

"Now let's see," said Mary Jane to herself, "Betty's room was right around a corner—" But there wasn't any room around that first corner—only a long hall. A lump came into Mary Jane's throat. The building was so big, so very, very big. And she felt so little, so very, very little. She swallowed twice, determined not to cry and then she said out loud in a queer frightened little voice, "I guess I'm lost. I'm lost in school!"

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SAND CASTLES

"I GUESS I'm lost! I'm lost in school!" Mary Jane's frightened little whisper sounded like a shout and the doors and walls and hallways seemed to echo back, "Lost! Little girl lost!" in a most desolate fashion. Mary Jane was so frightened that she stood perfectly still—just as still as though her shoes were fastened to the floor. And she looked straight ahead as though she was trying to see through the wall at which she was staring. To tell the truth, Mary Jane wasn't trying to see through the wall. She didn't even know a wall was in front of her. She couldn't see a single thing, not even a big wall, because a mist of tears was in her eyes and a great lump was growing in her throat.

Now Mary Jane wasn't a baby. And she never cried—or any way, she *hardly* ever cried because she was going on six and girls who are going on six don't cry. But to be

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lost in a strange school and in a strange city and—everything; well, it's not much wonder that Mary Jane felt pretty queer.

But before the tears had time to fall, there was a heavy footstep behind her and Mary Jane whirled around to see—the kindly face of Tom the janitor smiling at her.

"Aren't you pretty late getting to your room?" he asked.

Mary Jane couldn't answer. She was so relieved to have some one around that for a minute she just couldn't get the lump out of her throat enough to talk.

Tom must have been used to little girls —maybe he had one of his own—because he didn't pay any attention to Mary's silence. He took hold of her hand and said pleasantly, "Now don't you worry a minute. You just show me which your room is and I'll go with you."

"I'm looking for it too," said Mary Jane, finding her voice again, "but I don't know where it is."

"Don't know where your room is?" asked Tom in surprise.

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"No," replied Mary Jane with a decided shake of her head, "I don't." And then, for talking was now getting comfortable and easy, she added, "you see, it isn't really my room. It's Betty's. And I'm just a-visiting her. I'm just moved to Chicago and they haven't any chair for me only just to visit in when somebody's absent."

"That sounds like the kindergarten," said Tom.

"It is," agreed Mary Jane with a laugh of relief, "I'm kindergarten, I am."

"Then here we go, right down this way," said Tom, and off they started in just the opposite direction.

Before they got clear up to the kindergarten, though, they met Miss Gilbert, who was coming in search of the little visitor. "Betty missed her," she explained, "but I thought you'd find her, Tom." With a thank you to her janitor friend, Mary Jane took tight hold of the teacher's hand and they went into the kindergarten room together.

After that, the morning went very quickly

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and happily and Mary Jane could hardly believe her ears when the big whistles began to blow for twelve o'clock and Miss Gilbert told them to put away their scissors and cut-out papers and get ready to go home. Mary Jane had cut out two beautiful tulips and she was very happy when she was told they might be taken home as a souvenir of her visit.

On the way home they met Frances and Alice and Ed so they had plenty of company.

"What you doing Saturday?" asked Ed as they neared their own corner.

"I don't know," replied Alice, "is there anything nice to do—special?"

"Well," answered Frances," we were afraid you might all be busy—but—well you see, we were going to have a beach party and we thought maybe you folks would like to go along. All of you."

Now Alice and Mary hadn't the slightest idea what a beach party was, only of course they knew it must be something about the lake. But there wasn't time for questions

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and talk just then for Frances discovered that they had walked so slowly that they must rush on home to lunch.

"We'll get mother to tell you," she promised, "and do say you'll come 'cause it's a fire and cooking and marshmallows and piles of fun."

"And we've plenty of wires," added Betty, "and they're plenty long so you won't burn your fingers."

It sounded amazingly puzzling to Alice and Mary Jane, who couldn't in the least understand what a fire and wires and all that had to do with a beach. But they were to find out before so very long. For that same afternoon, while Alice was still in school, Mrs. Holden and Betty came over to call on Mrs. Merrill and Mary Jane and then the beach party was all explained.

"We go over to the lake very often," said Mrs. Holden. "And on the sandy beach, close by the water, the children build a big fire. Then, when the coals are good, we toast sandwiches and roast 'weenies' and toast marshmallows. The children are so

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anxious to show your girls just how it is done," she added, "and as the weather promises to be warm and sunny I think we should have an extra fine time."

So it was settled. And a person would have thought from the excitement and fun of preparation that the party was to be that same day instead of twenty-four hours away. For as soon as Alice and the older Holden children came home from school, they all set to work planning the menu and getting out baskets and cleaning the wires on which, so the Merrill girls learned, marshmallows were held over the coals to be toasted.

But when everything that could be done the day before, was finished, there was still some time for play, so the children went down into the Holden yard and the boys, Ed and John, showed the girls how to run a track meet—how to jump and vault and race in proper track style. Alice and Mary Jane thought the boys wonderfully skilled and the boys, thrilled by such warm admiration, broke all their previous records and had a beautiful time.

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At four o'clock the next afternoon the two families set out for the beach party. And it surely was quite a procession that made its way the four or five blocks to the park. First there was John with the wagon which held all the heavy things—baskets of food and such. Next came Ed, who started out walking behind the wagon to see that nothing dropped off. He and John were to take turns pulling the load. Then the others carried bundles of kindling and the wires for marshmallows and toasting racks for meat. They had such a jolly time getting off that everybody felt sure the party was to be a success.

Mary Jane had been so busy helping get settled and all that, that she hadn't had time for a real visit on the beach. To be sure she had had glimpses of the big blue they could see down their own street, but to really come over and see the lake and play in the sand—this was her first trip. So she skipped along very happily and thought she could hardly wait till they got there.

Fortunately they hadn't far to go. Three

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blocks down and two blocks over and there was the park—such a beautiful park with tiny lakes and bridges and great trees whose buds were swelling in the warm afternoon spring sunshine. Mary Jane thought she must be in fairyland come to life, it was all so beautiful. They crossed an arched bridge; saw a lovely view off toward the south where other bridges and lagoons and trees made such a pretty picture they were tempted to stay and look longer; walked around a big circle where, so John told them, the band gave concerts in the summer time; circled a tiny little inlet lake and come out, quite suddenly, right close to the big lake—Lake Michigan. It almost took Mary Jane's breath way, coming suddenly that way, upon the sight of so much water. It was all so blue and clear, she thought, for the minute, that surely it must be the very same ocean she had seen in Florida only a few weeks before.

But the boys didn't give much time for sight-seeing of lakes—they had seen the good old lake many a time and they were

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thinking more about supper than any view, however pretty.

So they hurried their wagon across the boulevard drive way, and of course all the folks had to follow close behind, and down the beach walk a couple of hundred yards and there they settled themselves on a stretch of clean white sand.

"Now," said big brother Linn, whom the girls hadn't seen much of as yet, but who seemed to be master of ceremonies, "you boys gather those big logs down there, you girls fix the kindling and I'll set these stones up so we get a good draft when we light our fire."

Everybody set to work. The logs proved to be so big and heavy that Ed and John were very glad to have the help of their father and Mr. Merrill to roll them into place. The four girls sorted out the kindling in their basket and added to it by picking up drift wood on the beach. Frances explained that they always brought some along to be sure they had some real dry wood for a start.

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With such good help and so much of it, of course it wasn't long till a fine blaze was going and the beach party was actually begun.

"Go ahead and play now," said Linn, when he saw the fire was started and that there was a big pile of reserve wood close by. "You know we can't cook till we get some coals."

"But I'm starved," hinted Ed, with a hungry look toward the baskets his mother and Mrs. Merrill were guarding.

"Then you'll have to stay starved, young man," said his mother, laughing, "because not a basket is to be opened till the coals are ready for cooking."

"Then let's make a sand castle," suggested Betty and she ran down to a smooth place on the beach, away from possible smoke, and began molding the white sand.

That pleased Mary Jane. She hadn't forgotten the fun she had playing on the beach in Florida, and while this beach was different—it didn't have any of the

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pretty shells or funny little crawdads she had found on the Florida beach—still it had lovely white sand and dainty little waves and was quite the nicest place for play that Mary Jane had seen.

"I'll tell you what let's do," suggested Alice, as she saw that all the children were going to play in the sand, "let's each build a castle and make it any way we like best and then when they're all finished, have an exhibition and everybody look and see which is the best."

"All right, let's," agreed the children and they set to work.

Mary Jane chose for her castle a place down close by the water. She loved the nearness of the waves and the thrill of knowing that maybe, if she didn't watch out, a wave would come up really close and get her wet. Betty picked out a spot nearer the fire on the side away from the smoke and Alice chose a place where a few pretty pebbles would give her material with which to pave a "moat" she intended to make.

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And then everybody set to work. So busy were they that Linn had to tend the fire all by himself and Ed forgot he was hungry.

Before very long that beach looked like a picture book. Towers and ditches and castles and bridges were where flat sand had been a few minutes before. The Holden children had made many a sand house and they knew just how to pack the damp sand so it would stay in place and just how to put a small board here and there to hold a second story or a tower straight and tall.

But with all their experience, Alice's castle was as pretty as theirs, or at any rate she thought it was, and Mary Jane's was quite wonderful. She smoothed off the "garden" in front of her palace, stuck in a few sticks for flowers, made a pebbly path down to the tiny lake she had scooped out at one side and then shouted, "Mine's done! Look at mine!" and stepped aside so all could see her handiwork.

But Mary Jane wasn't used to working so close to the water and she forgot entirely where she was! Instead of stepping to one

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And then, sliding in the wet sand, she sat right down in the lake and sent a wave of ripples right over her castle

Page 61

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side, as she should have done, she stepped backwards—straight into the big lake! And then, sliding in the wet sand, she sat right down in the lake and sent a big wave of ripples—right over her castle and garden and lake and everything and washed it all away, every bit!

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THE BEACH SUPPER

A MINUTE before Mary Jane slid into the lake, the beach was a scene of busy building and fun. Linn tended the fire, the grown folks gathered wood and visited and guarded baskets and the children all were intent on their sand castles. But with Mary Jane's tumble everything changed.

Sand flew helter skelter as the children jumped hastily and ran to Mary Jane's assistance; castles were trampled on as though they didn't exist and fire wood and baskets were all forgotten.

"Don't be afraid, you're all right!" called Mrs. Merrill as she ran toward her little girl.

"Coming! Coming! Here!" shouted Mr. Merrill re-assuringly as he dashed over to his little daughter, picked her up by the shoulders and set her, safe and sound, on

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dry sand just in time to miss a fair sized wave.

"I guess I'm wet!" said Mary Jane.

"I guess you are," laughed Mr. Merrill, "but I guess things will dry and you're not so very awfully too wet—not enough to spoil the party, is she, mother?"

Mrs. Merrill looked thoughtful and all the children waited anxiously for her answer. Would Mary Jane have to go clear off home and miss the party and everything! But it wasn't to be as bad as all that. Mrs. Merrill remembered the warm day, the glowing sun that was still bright and warm and she also remembered the hot fire Linn had under way and the warm sand all around the fire.

"Of course she isn't wet enough to spoil the party," said Mrs. Merrill, much to every one's relief. "Only she'll have to stay close by the fire till she gets warm and dry. Suppose we appoint her head cook and make her stay right there where it's hot?"

"She'll get dry then!" exclaimed Ed, so fervently that they all knew he had had

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many a hot face from working by the fire at previous picnics.

"But how about your castles?" asked Mr. Holden, "weren't we to have an exhibit?"

But the castles! Dear me! In the excitement of Mary Jane's tumble, no one had given a thought to the castles. They were stepped on, and trampled down and all matted down into the sand.

"That's just too bad!" said Mrs. Merrill.

"Pooh!" exclaimed John, dismissing the whole question of castles with one wave of the hand, "who cares about castles! *We're* going to have supper." And every one set to work.

Mary Jane was supposed to be head cook, but as she had never before been to a beach party, she really didn't know what to do. So she simply stayed close by the hot fire while the boys brought three benches and made them in a triangle around the fire—a little way back of course. Then Mrs. Holden and Mrs. Merrill unpacked the baskets and fixed a place on the bench for each person. To be sure nobody was ex-

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pected to sit on the bench—that would be quite too proper for a beach party meal. But the mothers put a paper plate and a cup for each person on the benches and then they put on the plate as many sandwiches and pickles and cookies and everything as each person was entitled to.

While they were doing this, Linn raked down the hot coals, set in place a light wire rack he had made and spread a couple of dozen weenies out to roast.

"Now then, Mary Jane," he said to the head cook, "you take this long fork. And as soon as a weenie begins to sputter and brown, turn it ove so it browns on the other side too."

That was a very important job, Mary Jane could easily see, and she determined that every weenie *she* cooked would be done just to a turn. She bent over the fire till her back got a crook in it; then she sat down on the hot sand close to the coals and by the time the weenies were done ready to eat she was so dry and hot that she felt sure she had never slipped into the lake—never!

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And all the time Mary Jane was cook, Linn and Mr. Merrill stayed close to see that the coals kept evenly hot and that no bit of flame started up to burn the head cook.

At last the weenies were ready. Each one was beautifully brown and was sizzling and sputtering and sending a most tempting odor to hungry folks.

"Form a line, folks," said Mrs. Holden, "ladies first!"

With much laughter, each person got their own roll, which had been split and buttered, and filed passed Mary Jane. And Mary Jane, instructed by Linn just how to do her job, picked up one weenie after another on the long fork and dropped each one in an open roll held out before her. It was a scary job, for the sand was close below and Mary Jane knew that weenies dropped into the sand wouldn't taste very good. But she took her time—too much time, John thought.

"Don't be 'fraid of any old sand," he assured her when she put his weenie in his roll so very carefully, "I eat 'em any way—sand or not."

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Betty eyed Mary Jane a bit enviously. This being chief cook and having a chance to fill the rolls of each person must surely be fun.

"Next time we have a beach party," she announced between bites, "*I'm* going to fall into the lake too!"

"I'll save you the trouble," replied Mr. Holden understandingly, "I'll let you be chief cook without getting wet."

Betty needn't have worried about Mary Jane's being willing to give up her job. For there was one disadvantage in that position Miss Betty hadn't thought of and Mary Jane had just discovered—the head cook had no time to eat. And Mary Jane was getting fearfully hungry. She was more than willing to give up the big fork, let Betty fill her roll for her and stand up with the others to eat the good hot morsel.

Did anything ever taste as good as those hot weenie sandwiches, eaten there on the edge of Lake Michigan, with the fine lake air blowing in their faces and the sunshine warming them and making them forget the

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chill of the long winter? The Merrills thought they had never had so much fun and tasted such good things. Every weenie (and there had seemed to be far too many) was eaten up; every roll disappeared and cookies and pickles and sandwiches just vanished as though a warm breeze had melted them away.

Supper over, the sun going down reminded the children that they must get the fire ready for dark. They scampered up and down the broad beach, gathering together all the pieces of drift wood they could find. Later in the year wood along that beach would be hard to find. But in the early spring, before the driftings of the winter's storms had been burned up by picnickers like themselves, there was plenty to be had.

Linn and Ed put away the cooking rack in the case they had made for it, the two mothers packed up débris and burned it so the beach would be left clean and tidy, and all the others gathered wood. Such a lot as they did find! Linn piled it on high and

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by the time the sun went to sleep in the west, the fire was so bright that nobody noticed the growing darkness. They all sat around on the warm sand and sang—college songs that the children had learned from the fathers, school songs and popular songs that they all knew. It was fun to sit there close by the big lake, to watch the sparks fly upward, to hear the waves swish against the sand and to sing and sing as loud as they liked.

But when the darkness settled down enough so that mysterious shadows lurked over every shoulder and the stars helped the fire make a light, Ed announced, "Now let's play Indian."

So they did. Playing Indian, the Merrill girls found, meant a queer follow-the-leader game. Ed led off first and everybody had to follow. He ran round and round the fire, prancing and yelling like a wild man. And the point of the game was for everybody to do exactly as he did. They ran and jumped and yelled till everybody was breathless with exercise and laughter and

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was glad to sit down again and do nothing.

By this time the fire had again died down to a bed of coals.

"*Now* it's time for the marshmallows, isn't it?" asked Betty. She was right, it was.

The boxes of marshmallows were opened, wires pulled out of the baskets and all the children sat around the fire a-toasting. 'Twas just as Betty had promised. The wires were plenty long enough so that no fingers needed to be burned or dresses scorched and the bed of coals was big enough to make room for all.

Betty and Mary Jane thought they would keep count and see who could eat the most, but after six they lost count, and they ate and ate till they simply couldn't eat any more.

"Let's play still pond," suggested Frances.

She stood up near the fire and announced, "Twenty steps, two jumps, three hops and a roll. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten—STILL POND."

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As she said the numbers off, the children began scampering to a place to safety. All but Mary Jane. She wasn't used to playing on the slippery, slid-y sand. And though she started off just as big as anybody, she slipped and stumbled and hadn't more than got to her feet when the words, "Still pond!" were called. And after that she couldn't move but just to use the steps, jumps, hops and roll Frances had given them.

To make matters even more exciting, Frances started off exactly in her direction.

But Mary Jane hadn't played "Still Pond" in her own yard for nothing. Perhaps she hadn't learned to run on slippery sand as yet, but she did know how to play that game. Instead of trying to quietly take her twenty steps in an effort to get out of Frances' way, she took two quick steps, dropped down on the sand, gave one little roll, and—was safely hidden under one of the picnic benches they had used for supper!

Frances passed so close Mary Jane could have touched her. Other folks were chased

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and found, but Mary Jane's hiding place was undiscovered. Of course when she rolled in under the bench, Mary Jane had expected to roll right out again when somebody else was caught. But when she found that they couldn't see her; that they went right around close at hand, talking about her and wondering where she was and all that, she thought it was such a good joke that she lay very still and watched.

She heard them asking each other where she was seen last; she heard her father say she couldn't be so very far away; and she saw them all start off in search of herself. Then, just the minute their backs were turned but before they had had time to be really frightened, she slipped out from under her seat, stood up close by the dying fire and shouted, "Here I am, can't you see me?"

They thought it a very good joke she had played and Mary Jane was sure she would always remember that the best hiding place is often the nearest one.

"Time to go home," said Mr. Holden,

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looking at his watch, "the fire's most out and the party's over."

"But there'll be another one, won't there?" begged Mary Jane.

"Let's have it next week," said Betty.

The boys loaded up the empty baskets on their wagon—not much of a load going home! Mr. Merrill raked out the fire so no harm would come to anything; Mr. Holden gathered the children together and started the line of march. It was a happy little crowd that wandered homeward and they all agreed with Mary Jane when she said, "Well, anyway, I think a beach party's the mostest fun I know. It's more fun than moving!"

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MARY JANE GOES SHOPPING

THE days after the beach party seemed to fly past on wings. First it was a Monday and then, before a person could do half the nice things planned, Saturday was coming 'round again and Alice was home all day from school and fun for the four Merrills could be planned. Mrs. Merrill and Mary Jane took to doing all their "Saturday marketing" on Friday afternoon so they could have more time on Saturday for trips and sight-seeing and all the lovely things folks like to do when they've just moved to a big city.

One Saturday morning, not so very long after the beach party, dawned—not bright and warm and sunny as Mary Jane had hoped it surely would—but rainy and cold and windy as some May mornings are sure to be in Chicago. A cold northeast wind raced across the city and folks had blue noses and

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shivery finger tips and not a single thing to be seen looked like spring.

"Now just look at it!" exclaimed Mary Jane as she stared out of the living-room window, "and we were going to take a trip through the parks and I was going to wear my new hat and everything. And look!"

"And we can't go to the parks again for another whole week!" bemoaned Alice, "'cause there's school!"

"Just look!" exclaimed Mary Jane again as a hard gust of wind tossed the rain against the winds exactly as though Mr. Rain was saying to Mary Jane, "Thought you'd go out, did you? Well, look what I'm doing!"

"You girls talk as though parks were the only things to see in Chicago," said Mrs. Merrill as pleasantly and comfortably as though there was no such thing as a disappointment in the world.

Alice and Mary Jane turned away from the window quickly. Something in their mother's tone of voice made them suspect that the day wasn't to be a disappointment after all.

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"It's funny to me," continued Mrs. Merrill in a matter of fact voice, "that you folks haven't asked to go to the big stores—wouldn't you like to?"

"Like to!" exclaimed Alice.

"Would we?" cried Mary Jane. "But we didn't think about it!"

"Then we'll think about it now," replied Mrs. Merrill. "If you can hold an umbrella down tight over your head so as not to get your hat wet, I think we could manage to get to the train without getting soaked. And once down at the store, we could check our wet umbrellas and shop and sight-see through the stores all we wished to without a bit of hurry."

"Oh, may we really go?" asked Alice.

"Well," answered Mrs. Merrill, pretending to hesitate, "if you *really* care to—"

That settled it and there was no more time wasted talking about weather *that* morning. Dishes were washed and beds were made and dusting was done so quickly that the little flat must have been quite surprised and pleased with itself—it got put into rights so

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very quickly. Then Mary Jane got her hair fixed nicely and a pretty hair bow put on—the bow wouldn't show very much under the new hat, but even that little had to be just right—and then, while mother fixed her own and Alice's hair, she put on a pretty dress—not a party dress, of course, but a nice, pretty, dark dress. Then they all put on rubbers and raincoats and locked up the doors and took their umbrellas and started for the train.

Going down town on the train was fun. In the city where Mary Jane lived before, one could walk down town. Or if one really wanted to ride, a street car hustled one to the stores in about five minutes. But in Chicago, so she discovered, she had to have a ticket and go through a gate, and up stairs and onto a platform and aboard a train and everything just as though one intended to go away, far off. The girls both liked to ride down town. To be sure they couldn't see much of the lake, even though they did ride right along beside it, because the rain made it all look dim and gray and foggy.

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But they knew the lake was there; they could see the spray the waves made and once in a while they could hear the noise of splashing water above the roar of the train. All too soon, for there was so much to see, the train pulled into their station and the conductor shouted, "Randolph Street! Everybody out! Far's we go!" And all the folks aboard got their umbrellas ready and went out into the rain.

Fortunately it was only a very little way from the station to the big store where Mrs. Merrill took the girls, so they didn't have a chance to get tired or very wet. And as soon as they got indoors, Mrs. Merrill found a checking place and they left wet umbrellas and wet raincoats and wet rubbers and started out for fun.

"I think that's awfully convenient—just to leave things that way," said Alice as she settled her collars and cuffs and made sure she was tidy, "and of course we'll get them back safely?" This checking system was new to her and she wanted to be assured it was all right.

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"To be sure we will," said Mrs. Merrill. "See? I have the checks for them."

"Well, then," said Mary Jane, "let's begin."

"Yes," said Alice, "let's. And let's see *everything!*"

"All right," laughed Mrs. Merrill; "shall we take an elevator first?"

"Oh, no," answered Alice, "'cause then we'd miss the first floor."

So they "did" the first floor, seeing all the handkerchiefs and jewelry and bags and fans and pretty decorations and ribbons—Alice could hardly leave those lovely ribbons—and neckwear—Mary Jane saw five different neckties she needed—and so many things.

"Do they have anything left for the second floor?" asked Mary Jane when they finally got around to where they had started.

"You just see," said Mrs. Merrill.

And sure enough there were plenty of things on the second floor, pretty dishes and lamps and so many things that, really, Mary Jane almost got tired looking at them all.

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By the time they got ready for the third floor, Mary Jane was wondering if there were any seats in that store. Not seats where you sit down to buy things, but really seats where you just sit down whether you buy anything or not. And sure enough there were just those seats. Nice, big comfy ones, that appeared to be made for Mary Janes who went a-shopping and wanted to sit down. The Merrills sat down on a big couch and Mary Jane leaned back ready to rest when—who should she see right in front of her but Frances Westland! The girl she met at grandmother's house nearly a year ago.

In a jiffy Mary Jane forgot all about wanting to sit down. She slid down from the comfortable couch, dashed after Frances, who, not guessing that a friend was so near, was hurrying by, and brought her back to meet mother and Alice.

Then they all sat down for a visit.

"No, I'm not living here," said Frances in answer to Mrs. Merrill's question, "I've been spending the spring with my auntie

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and going to school here. But just as soon as school is out I'm going back home. Mother needs me."

"I don't doubt it," replied Mrs. Merrill, who was much pleased with the little girl, "I'm sure your mother misses you greatly. But where are you living and can't we see you before you go and can't you take lunch with us to-day?"

It seemed that Frances's auntie lived in the same part of the city the Merrills lived in and there was every reason to believe that the girls might see each other at least once or twice in the little time left of the school year.

"But I don't believe I can eat lunch with you," added Frances, "'cause auntie and I have to hurry home." So with a promise to come to see them soon at the address Mrs. Merrill wrote out on her card for Frances, the friends said good-by.

"I'll declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill, looking at her watch after Frances left them. "It's almost twelve o'clock already! And we were to meet father at one. If you girls

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want to see anything of the toys and dolls and playrooms, we'd better not be sitting around here any longer."

Of course the girls did want to see the toys and dolls and everything. When they got to the fourth floor where all the children's things were kept, they were sorry they had spent even a minute any place else. For all the lovely dolls and marvelous toys and enticing games and beautiful pictures and fascinating puzzles made a person think that Santa Claus's shop and fairyland and magic were all mixed up together and set down in one place. The girls looked and looked and looked. They "oh-ed" and "ah-ed" and exclaimed till they couldn't think of anything more to say—and then they kept right on looking just the same.

Mary Jane picked out the doll coat she wanted Georgiannamore to have and Alice selected a lovely desk. They agreed upon a set of dishes and upon charming furniture for their balcony—just the right size too.

"And we'll pretend we'll buy it all, mother," said Mary Jane, who knew per-

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fectly well she couldn't buy all the things she talked about getting, "and we'll pretend we'll have it all sent up, that'll be such fun."

So they pretended and looked and looked and pretended till they had been over most all that part of the store.

"Now then," said Mrs. Merrill, "if we're to meet Dadah for lunch—"

"Oh, goody!" cried Alice, "are we to meet him here?"

"Not here," said Mrs. Merrill, "but in this store in the lunch room and in ten minutes. So we'd better wash our hands and go to the lunch room floor."

Mr. Merrill was waiting for them and had a table engaged close by a charming fountain ("Just think of a fountain in a house!" exclaimed Mary Jane when she spied it) and all the time Mary Jane sat there eating, she could look right over and watch the fishes and she could hear the splash of the water.

But Mary Jane wasn't thinking of fishes or water just then. She was hungry. And the things her father read to her sounded so good—oh, dear, but they did sound good!

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She and Alice had a dreadfully hard time deciding just what did sound the best. But Alice finally decided on stuffed chicken legs (she hadn't an idea what they were but they sounded good) and potato salad and strawberry parfait. And Mary Jane chose chicken pie—a whole one all her own—and hashed brown potatoes and orange sherbet.

While the lunch was being fixed, Mr. Merrill took Mary Jane over to the window so she could look down, down, way down, to the street below, where the folks appeared so little and upside down and where the automobiles looked like the ones they had just seen in the toy department.

When the lunch came, it proved to be just as good as the menu promised it would be and the girls enjoyed every bite. Mary Jane was afraid for a minute that she had made a mistake. For Alice's parfait came in a tall glass, with a long spoon that made the girls think of the story of the fox and the goose and the banquet, and Mary Jane was sure nothing she had ordered could be as nice as parfait. But when the maid set

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the orange sherbet at her place, Mary Jane was quite satisfied, for the ice was set in a real orange, all cut out in dainty scallops and trimmed with green.

"Yummy-um!" she whispered, happily. "I'm so glad you had this party, Dadah!"

Dadah seemed to want everything to be all right, for he had added to their order some little cakes, done up in frilly papers and unlike anything the girls had ever seen. They almost hated to eat them, they were so pretty, but cakes one cannot eat are not good for much, Mr. Merrill reminded them, and so the cakes were eaten up.

"Now then," said Mary Jane, as she dabbled her fingers in the finger bowl and ate up the candy she found at the side of the tiny tray, "what do we do next?"

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THE BUS RIDE

"WHAT do we do next?" asked Mr. Merrill, repeating Mary Jane's question. "I'm sure of this much—we must do something *very* nice because it's such a nice day."

"*Nice day!*" exclaimed Alice. "What in the world are you talking about, Dadah? This is the worst weather we've had since we came to Chicago—but we don't care 'cause we're having such a good time anyway."

Mr. Merrill laughed and replied, "Suppose you look out of the window."

So they left their cozy table, where nothing but empty dishes told the story of their delightful lunch party, and wandered over to the window where Mary Jane had looked down at the street not much over an hour before. But what a difference! With a sudden, unexpected shift of wind that only the Chicago weather man knows how to

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bring about, the stiff, cold northeaster that had brought the cold rain of the morning had been sent off and in its place a warm breeze from the south blew softly across the city, bringing with it sunshine and warmth and pleasantness for all.

"Why—" exclaimed Mary Jane, much puzzled, "where's the rain?"

"Did you want it back?" laughed Mrs. Merrill, and then she explained to the girls something about the effect the big lake might have on weather and told them that one of the queer things about Chicago was its sudden changes to good, or sometimes bad, weather.

"So I was wondering," said Mr. Merrill, "if you folks wouldn't like an hour of fresh air and then, if you're not through shopping we can come back to the stores."

The girls hadn't an idea what he might want to do, but they were pretty sure it would be fun. So they agreed that an hour out of doors was just what they most wanted and they went down to get wraps from the check room. They left the umbrellas till

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later, put on their wraps and left the store.

"Now then," said Mr. Merrill, "see that big bus down there—we're going for a ride on the top."

"What's a bus?" asked Mary Jane, who had never heard the word before. But before her father could answer they were pushed into the crowd at the crossing, hurried across and the next second Mr. Merrill had hailed a great, lumbering, top-heavy automobile and was helping the girls to step aboard.

The "bus" proved to be a large-sized passenger automobile, with a deck on top for passengers who wished to ride in the open air. Mary Jane and Alice were thrilled with the fun of getting on it. It seemed exactly like going aboard a house-boat on wheels. They stepped into a little hallway and then—and this wasn't so easy because the bus immediately began to move—they climbed up a curving flight of stairs and walked down an aisle—an awfully wiggly aisle it was too!—to seats on the very front row.

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Then, before they had had a chance to look around or feel at home, the conductor, who stood at the back, shouted, "Low bridge!" and everybody ducked their heads while the great bus went under the elevated railroad. Mary Jane felt, truly, as though she must be a person in a story book—Arabian Nights or something marvelous—because surely the things that were happening to her weren't *really* happening.

But after the elevated was passed, the bus rolled out onto Michigan Boulevard and Mary Jane settled herself comfortably in her front seat with her mother, smiled across the aisle to Alice and her father and began to feel really at home in her high perch. By the time the bus had turned northward and crossed the river, she began to feel that riding on the top of a bus was the thing she'd been wanting to do all her life. It was such fun to sit up high and watch the lake, so blue and beautiful in the sunshine, the trees just getting a tinge of green at the tips, the pretty houses that lined the parkway, the people—it seemed as everybody in

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Chicago must be out in their 'tother best clothes—and most of all, it was fun to watch the automobiles dart in and out of the crowd, around the bus and beside it, till Mary Jane was sure their driver must be some wonderful being to be able to manage so that everybody stayed alive!

"Here, Mary Jane," said Mr. Merrill, interrupting Mary Jane's sight-seeing, "don't you want to pay your fare—Alice is paying ours." He slipped two dimes into her hand just as the conductor stepped to the front of the bus. Mary Jane wasn't quite sure what she was to do with the dimes till she noticed that the conductor had in his hand a queer-looking thing like a clock, only it had a hole in the top just the right size for a dime. Into that hole Mary Jane dropped a dime. And—"ding*ding!*" went a musical little bell somewhere in the "clock." Then she dropped the other dime. And again the bell sounded, "ding*ding!*" just as though it tried to say "Thank *you!*" that way. Alice then dropped her two dimes and Mary Jane had the fun of hearing the bell again. She

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thought she wouldn't do a thing but watch the conductor and listen to his bell all the time he collected fares, but just as he stepped back to get the next folks' money the bus passed in front of the queer old stone building with great tower that Mr. Merrill said was the city water works building, and of course that meant the girls wanted to hear about when it was built and hear again the story Mr. Merrill had started to tell them several evenings before about how the great Chicago fire started and how it burned up to this very spot they were now passing. Somehow, being at that place and seeing the one building that stood through the fire made the history stories seem very plain and there were a lot of questions to be asked and answered.

But busses don't wait for questions—the girls soon discovered that! Long before the fire story was told they had raced up Lake Shore Drive, passed its beautiful old homes, and were turning into Lincoln Park. Here it seemed to the girls that the city ended and fairyland began. The grass

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seemed greener, the lake bluer and the trees greener than any place they had seen; and hundreds of tulips peeping up through the ground here, there and everywhere, made spots of bright vivid color and beauty.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mary Jane happily, "I hope the bus goes on and on forever! I'd like to keep on riding all the time!"

But when, a minute or two later, they passed near the buildings of the Zoo, Mary Jane forgot all about wanting to ride forever and wanted to get out, right away quick and see all the animals she had heard lived there.

"Not to-day," said Mr. Merrill, looking at his watch. "You remember we are to go back to the stores—we're just out for a bit of fresh air this time. Some other day when it's still warmer so we can get our dinner here, then we'll come and visit the Zoo. But to-day I want to get back to the stores before they close."

"Of course," added Alice, "for our umbrellas."

"Of course for something else too,"

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laughed her father, and though both girls were very curious, not another word would he say.

So they stayed on the bus and rode clear through the park, and up Sheridan Road a long way till the bus turned around at a corner and the conductor shouted, "Far's we go!"

But the Merrills didn't get off. They wanted to keep those good front seats so they sat still and in about two minutes the bus started south and whirled them through the park and past all the same interesting sights on the way cityward. This time, Mary Jane felt very much at home in her high-up perch. She dropped in the dimes her father gave her, eyed the passing autos without a bit of fear and looked down on all the children she saw walking and playing quite as though she had lived in a city and ridden in busses all her young life.

It was a very reluctant pair of young ladies that Mr. Merrill assisted to the sidewalk when the big stores and "time to get off" were reached.

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"But what was it besides umbrellas you wanted to get?" asked Mary Jane, suddenly remembering.

"Well," said Mr. Merrill, "I haven't been through the toy department with anybody. And I have a calendar."

The girls looked puzzled. What had the toy department to do with a calendar? They couldn't guess. Even Mrs. Merrill looked puzzled.

"Of course if you don't intend to have birthdays since we've moved—" said Mr. Merrill teasingly. And then everybody knew! To be sure! It was almost time for Mary Jane's birthday—almost a year, it was, since the lovely birthday party when the little girl was five years old—and in the excitement of moving and getting settled and seeing new sights, even the little lady herself had forgotten how near the day was at hand.

"It's mine!" exclaimed Mary Jane happily, "and I'll be six! Come on, quick, Dadah! and I'll show you perzactly what I want." When Mary Jane got excited she

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sometimes got words a little mixed, but her father knew well enough just what she meant. She grabbed hold of his hand, called to her mother and Alice to come on with them and away they went toward the elevator, that quickly took them to the toy section.

Going through that department the second time was even more fun than the first trip, because now father was along to see things and to explain mechanical toys. And also because there was the fun of picking out the thing she wanted to wish for, for her birthday. That last was a very serious matter, as every little girl knows.

They looked at dolls—but not a doll was as lovely as Georgiannamore, at least that was Mary Jane's opinion—and then they looked at furniture and at dishes and toys and games and clothes for dolls and, well, at every single thing in that whole big department. After everything had been considered and looked at and thought about, and it was about time for the big warning bell to ring and tell folks that in ten minutes

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the store would close and everybody'd have to get out, then and not until then, Mary Jane decided that the thing she wanted most of all was a doll cart. A beautiful little ivory enameled doll cart made just exactly like the one that Junior's little brother had back at their old home. A cart with a top that moved back and forth just like a real baby cart and that had cushions and tires and everything that a really truly mother is particular to want for her baby.

"Yes," said Mary Jane, as she looked around the store with a rather tired sigh, "I think that's the thing I want the most and I'm going to wish for it, Dadah."

"Sounds easily settled," laughed her father, "but do you know what time it is?"

Before she could answer, the warning bell rang and clerks began to cover up counters and to straighten up the store for its Sunday rest. So the Merrills four hurried down to get umbrellas and to go home.

On the train going home Mary Jane was so tired looking at things that she didn't care a bit about looking any more. She

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watched the lake some, but mostly she simply settled back in her little corner behind the door and just sat. Thoughts of all the wonderful things she had seen that day raced through her mind—the lunch, the ride, the lake, the park—but most of all, that wonderful doll cart, and she couldn't help wondering (and of course hoping) if she really truly would, *possibly*, get that lovely gift for her birthday.

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THE BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

AS soon as they got home that evening, and had dinner and rested up a bit, Mary Jane hunted up a calendar so she could find out about her birthday. And she discovered that two weeks from that same day was "her" day.

"It's Saturday, so you can do something too!" she said to Alice. "Now, Mother, let's plan."

So they talked over all the nice things a person *might* do for a birthday, but long before they could decide which was the very nicest of all the plans, bedtime came. Then the next morning there were interesting things to do, and nobody thought about plans for a day that was two weeks away. That is, nobody but Mary Jane thought about it, and, if the truth must be told, she thought more about the doll cart she had

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wished for than she did about what she might do to celebrate.

Monday noon, when Alice came home for her luncheon, she was much excited.

"Who do you s'pose I saw at recess this morning?" she demanded. "Guess!"

But Mrs. Merrill and Mary Jane couldn't guess—they didn't know anybody in Chicago to guess! Or at least they thought they didn't.

"I saw—" began Alice slowly, for she wanted the fun of keeping them waiting to last as long as possible, "I saw—Frances Westland! And she goes to my school!"

"Why in the world didn't we know that?" said Mrs. Merrill. "We should have guessed! Of course she goes to your school. I remember of thinking she wasn't very far from us."

"Can't we have her come to see us?" asked Mary Jane eagerly.

"I already asked her if she couldn't come," explained Alice, "because I knew you'd want me to, and she says she's sure she can. But she can't come next Saturday because she

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and her auntie are going to Milwaukee to spend the week-end. But she thought she could come the next Saturday."

"And that's my birthday," Mary Jane reminded her.

"I know it," agreed Alice, "but I didn't tell her. I just said I'd find out what we were doing that day and let her know this afternoon—was that all right, Mother?"

"You did exactly right, dear," said Mrs. Merrill reassuringly. "Come right out to the dining-room now, because your soup is ready and you mustn't hurry yourself too much with your lunch. While we eat, we'll plan for the birthday."

Of course there were many plans to be talked of, because in a big city there are so many kinds of things one may do. And it was awfully hard to decide which plan was the very most fun—you know how that is yourself. But after every plan that any of the three could think of had been discussed carefully, Mary Jane decided that there were two things she wanted the most to do. First, she wanted to stay home to celebrate

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and have a party and all that; and, second, she wanted to go down town and go to a big grown-up theater where there was music and lights and pretty things just like grown folks see up town. And for her part she admitted that she didn't see how a person possibly, even on a birthday, could do those two conflicting things.

"Pooh!" laughed Mrs. Merrill, "that's easy! I was telling Dad the other night that inasmuch as this was the first birthday in the city and on Saturday and everything —so convenient for us all—we'd better do those very two things."

"But how'll we do it, Mother?" asked Alice. "We can't stay home for a party while we're down town at the theater!"

"To be sure, we can't," agreed Mrs. Merrill. "But we can stay home for a party *before* we go down town for a show. And that's just what we're going to do. You hurry off to school now, dear, because it's ten of one. And next time you see Frances Westland, you invite her to come here for twelve o'clock luncheon a week from next

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Saturday. Be sure to tell her it's an all-afternoon party, so she can stay long enough to go down town with us."

"And who else'll we have?" asked Mary Jane, when Alice had gone. "It wouldn't be a party with one person."

"Of course not," said her mother. "There are going to be three folks. After school this very day you are going to invite Frances and Betty Holden—that'll make it almost a 'Frances' party, won't it? We'll ask them right away, even though a week from Saturday is a long time off, because Dadah will want to get the tickets and we will all want to make our plans."

A week and five days seem a very long time, when you have to wait for them. But Mary Jane found that, after all, they went quicker than she had thought they could, because there was so much to do. First she had to decide what she wanted to have to eat at the luncheon. After much thought and consultation the menu was made out and tacked up on the kitchen cabinet for future reference. Mary Jane printed it out

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all by herself and the letters were big and plain and could be easily read by any cook—especially Mother. It said:

CHICKEN BALLS
HOT ROLLS
FRUIT SALAD WITH WHIPPED CREAM
ICE CREAM CAKE
HASHED BROWN POTATOES
JELLY

Chicken balls really meant chicken croquettes, but croquettes proved to be such a big and puzzling word that Mary Jane decided she would say balls and Mrs. Merrill agreed to take a verbal order for the croquette part of the luncheon.

When the food was planned for, Mary Jane began to talk about the decorations. It was soon found that to be really pretty, the table trimmings would have to be made by the hostess herself, so Mary Jane set to work. From the advertising sections of magazines she cut letters about an inch high. Letters enough to spell everybody's first name and last initial. She had to have the

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last initial because two of her guests had the same first name. These she sorted very carefully and put in envelopes; one envelope for each person and just the right letters in that envelope for the person's name. Then, she planned, when the luncheon was all ready, she would put the letters in little piles in front of each person's place and let them puzzle out the names before they sat down.

Mrs. Merrill promised to have a basket of flowers, spring flowers that Mary Jane loved so very much, in the center of the table. And Mary Jane planned to make a procession of girls and boys all around the basket. These she cut out of magazines too and she chose girls and boys who were doing all the things that she herself liked to do.

With all these things, besides regular duties and fun, to keep her busy, Mary Jane didn't really have a chance to think her birthday was a long time coming. First thing *she* knew it was Friday night and the birthday was the very next morning!

On Saturday morning, she waked up

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knowing something nice was going to happen. Then, before her eyes were really open, she felt herself getting mother's birthday kisses and, before those were all delivered, Alice's birthday spats—six good big lively ones!

"Never you mind, Alice," she promised, "just wait till it's *your* birthday and you'll get some of the hardest—"

"Don't stop for promises," said Mr. Merrill, coming in to deliver his spats too, "what I want is breakfast and for the life of me, *I* can't get into that dining-room."

"*Oh!*" cried Mary Jane rapturously, "I'll be right out!"

"Not till you get dressed, you know," Alice reminded her, "so do hurry!" For it was one of the rules of the Merrill household that birthdays and Christmases didn't really begin till folks were dressed. So Mary Jane scrabbled into her clothes and gave her face and hands about the most hurry-up washing they had ever had and then rushed out to the dining-room.

And there, standing right by her chair, was

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the—yes, really—the very doll cart she had picked out! She was so happy that for a minute she couldn't speak, she just stared. The next minute she was down on her knees with her arms around the whole cart—or at least as much of the cart as two six-year-old arms could get around—and she was counting over all the wonderful virtues of her gift. It surely was a cart to make any little girl proud and when Mary Jane saw her own Georgiannamore, wearing a lovely new coat (Mrs. Merrill's gift), and a pair of really truly gloves (from Alice), and sitting up as big as life in the cart, she thought the happiest day of her life had come.

After breakfast the morning raced by on wings. Of course Mary Jane had to show the cart and doll's clothes to Betty and they had to walk around the block to give the doll an airing. Then, just as they got back to Mary Jane's apartment, the postman came with a box from grandpa and grandma. Betty was invited up for the fun of opening it and she was glad to come both for the fun and for the big pieces of grandmother's

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candy that she got when the box was opened. Then there was the table to set and the puzzle letters to put around and everbody to dress in their best—that's a good deal for one morning. No wonder it seemed to be an unusually short one.

At the very last minute, Mary Jane with her new white dress and pink ribbons all just as they should be, went in to the kitchen to see if she could help. And at that very minute a neighbor came in to get Mrs. Merrill's advice about an important matter.

"Everything's ready now," said Mrs. Merrill, as she left the kitchen. "Only, I believe, Mary Jane, it would be a good idea for you to put that whipped cream into the ice box. We won't make the salad till they get here and I want to keep it stiff and cold."

Now, Mary Jane had put things in the ice box many a time. Big things and little things and spilly things and all, and there was no reason in the world why she couldn't do it all right. No reason, except— Just as she picked up the bowl of cream, the door bell rang a long, loud peal that she was sure

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must be her three guests coming all at once, so she hurried and the cream jiggled in the bowl, and slid over the edge—and all down the front of her best new dress!

Fortunately Alice came into the kitchen just then, in time to see the accident, and to notice two big tears which popped into Mary Jane's eyes and threatened to spill down her cheeks.

"Pooh!" she exclaimed comfortably, "don't you worry about a little thing like that, Mary Jane," and she made a grab for the bowl, rescued some of the cream and set it in the ice box. "I'll have you fixed up so soon that you won't know anything happened."

"But it's all down my dress," said Mary Jane, trying her very best not to cry.

"Oh, well," replied Alice, nothing daunted, "it's not going to stay there long." She took a clean cloth, dampened it with cold water and, with quick little dabs, scrubbed the cream all off the front of the birthday dress. Then she took a fresh cloth, and more cold water and, putting a big, clean

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"But it's all down my dress," said Mary Jane, trying her very best not to cry *Page 111*

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towel under the front of the dress, scrubbed again till every trace of the cream was gone. Then she opened the oven door so the heat would help dry the wetness and with a fresh cloth rubbed and rubbed the wet place till it was entirely dry.

"There now," she said, as she shook the dress into place, "I think the girls are here; let's go see." And immediately the accident that threatened to spoil Mary Jane's fun was forgotten.

Sure enough, the girls had come and the party began at once.

The letter puzzles for place cards proved to be lots of fun and filled in the time while Mrs. Merrill brought in the plates of good things to eat. Judging by the appetites Mary Jane's menu must have been a favorite with everybody, for the goodies disappeared by magic and Mrs. Merrill filled up plates and passed rolls and brought in salad and everything till she hardly had time to eat her own luncheon.

The ice cream was a surprise even to Mary Jane. On the plate was, first, a big, round

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piece of cake; then, on top of that, was a slice of ice cream, white, and on top of *that* a ball of pink ice cream with a pink candle, lighted, stuck in the top. They looked so pretty and bright that the girls hated to blow them out, but Mrs. Merrill said every one was to make a wish and then blow and if the candle went out on the first blow the wish would come true.

Alice suddenly remembered that they were to take a train at one-thirty and that it was nearing one now, so the dessert was finished in a hurry, wraps were hastily put on and the whole party started for the train to meet Mr. Merrill and have the rest of the fun.

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LOST—ONE DOLL CART

THERE was only one thing wrong about the birthday celebration and that was that the day was such a very busy, happy one that there was very little time for playing with the new doll cart. Of course Mary Jane and Betty took their dolls out for one airing in the morning soon after breakfast. But what is one little airing when one has a new cart? Nothing at all, Mary Jane thought. All through the luncheon and the ride down town and the play father took them to, which proved to be just the very most interesting kind of a play for little girls to see, Mary Jane kept thinking of her new cart and of the fun she would have on Monday when there was a whole day for Georgiannamore and the doll cart.

So when Monday morning actually came Mary Jane lost no time getting up and doing her share of the morning work. Mary

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Jane was very particular about her morning work. She didn't want her mother to have to do the things a six-year-old girl was plenty big enough to do; and then, anyway, she knew it was lots more fun to work when two did the job than for one person to work alone. She picked up all the papers, and emptied the waste baskets, and cleaned the bathroom washstand and the kitchen sink—she liked those jobs the best because they were so scrubby and grown-up and interesting—and put out clean towels and dusted the living-room. Of course this was after the dishes were washed and put away; that was a job with which Alice helped too, before she started for school. So by the time Mary Jane was ready to play Mrs. Merrill was about through too, ready for sewing or baking or whatever she had to do that day.

"I think I'd better help you take down your cart," suggested Mrs. Merrill, when the last job was finished. "It's not so easy for one person to take that cart down from the second floor. But it will be no trouble at all for you to take one end and me to take

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the other and carry it down together. Then you can put Georgiannamore in it before you start down and there'll be no danger of bouncing her out."

"But how'll I get back up, Mother?" asked Mary Jane.

"Ring the bell three short taps and I'll come down to meet you," answered Mrs. Merrill. "Don't try to bring it up alone; it's far too heavy."

Mary Jane dressed Georgiannamore in her very best dress, put on the new coat and gloves, tucked her carefully into the cart so she wouldn't catch cold by being out for a long walk, and then she and Mrs. Merrill carried the cart, oh, so very carefully, down stairs and out to the sidewalk.

Fortunately, that May morning was bright and sunny; the breeze blew warm from the southland instead of cold and blustery from the lake, and it was the very best kind of a morning possible for being out of doors. Mary Jane walked around the block, starting toward the lake, then she went around the block the other way, and of

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course she went rather slowly because there was so much to see and to show Georgianna-more. Bright colored crocuses were blooming in all the yards where there were houses —and in that particular neighborhood there were many houses as well as apartments—tulips were bursting up through the ground and the lilac buds were swelling their plump green sides nearly to the bursting point.

On the third time around, Mary Jane thought of school—to be sure, it couldn't be anywhere near time for school to be out, because the morning hadn't much more than begun, but then it would be fun to go around to the corner where the children crossed the street to go to school. There were so many automobiles whizzing around the streets that a little girl even as old as six couldn't be allowed to cross streets without a grown person or an older sister along.

She went around the block to the corner where the children would come, after a while, and there, just as she turned to start back home, thinking she'd come here again

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nearer noon, she heard a commotion. Looking down the half block to the yard around the school house she heard a bell peal out and saw, yes, truly, crowds of children coming out of school! And just as she was about to look around to see if there was a fire or a parade or anything special to cause school to be dismissed early, she heard the whistles blow for noon—the morning was gone! That's how time flies when a person has a new doll cart!

Mary Jane waited at the corner till Alice and Frances and Betty came along together and they all four walked home.

"You shouldn't bother to carry your cart clear upstairs every time," suggested Frances, "when our front porch is so handy. Just run the cart up on the porch, lock the brake and it will be safe as can be till you eat your lunch."

Alice thought that was a good idea too, so the cart was left there, locked with the brake, and with the understanding that if Mrs. Merrill didn't approve, the girls would come down and get it at once.

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Lunch was ready and waiting, so the cart stayed on the porch while the girls ate and then Mary Jane walked back toward school as far as she was allowed to go.

By the time Mary Jane got back in front of her own apartment, Mrs. Merrill was ready to go and do her marketing and errands and of course Mary Jane and Georgiannamore went along and had a beautiful time—especially when they looked in the windows and saw all the good things to eat. Mary Jane had thought that she knew every sort of good thing a person could possibly want to eat, but she soon found out that she didn't. For in one of the windows they passed she saw a tray of apples, covered with something slick and brown and carrying in their stem ends a small smooth stick like a butcher's skewer.

"What are they, Mother?" she exclaimed. "Don't they look *good!* And may we buy some?"

Mrs. Merrill went inside the store and Mary Jane, anxiously watching her mother

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through the window, waited outside with the doll and cart. She saw her mother speak to the salesman, look at the apples and then, oh, joy! saw him pick out four fine ones under Mrs. Merrill's direction and put them in a paper bag.

"He says they are called Taffy Apples," explained Mrs. Merrill when she came out, "and that all the girls and boys like them very much. So I didn't bother to consult you," she added with a twinkle in her eye. "I bought some for you four girls to eat after school—just on a chance that you might like them."

The bag was carefully tucked in under the folds of Georgiannamore's robe and the walking and shopping were resumed, but all the time, Mary Jane kept her eye on the hump made by the bag of apples and kept wishing that time for school to be out would hurry up and come. Some good fairy must have heard the wishes too, for the afternoon hurried by almost as fast as the morning and first thing Mary Jane knew they were all

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through the errands and were going down the street toward the school, ready to meet Alice.

"Do you like 'Taffy Apples'?" Mary Jane asked Betty as soon as she came out of the school yard.

"Like 'em—u-um!" replied Betty expressively.

"Well," continued Mary Jane slowly, so the surprise wouldn't be over too soon, "I've got one in there," pointing to the cart.

Betty eyed the hump Mary Jane pointed out and smiled knowingly.

"It looks like more than one," she suggested hopefully.

"It is more than one," answered Mary Jane delightedly; "it's four—all for us."

"Can we eat 'em now?" demanded Betty.

"Better wait till we get home," suggested Mrs. Merrill; "that won't be more than five minutes and then there won't be any danger of stumbling and running a stick into your throats."

The two little girls didn't loiter much after that. They skipped along briskly and

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soon were ahead of Mrs. Merrill and Alice and Frances.

"I'll tell you what," said Betty, as they turned into her own yard, "let's put the cart up on the porch while I get my doll and then when we get through eating our apples we'll be all ready to go walking."

She picked up the front end and Mary Jane took the handle end and they set the cart up at the end of the porch and went into the house. Fortunately Mary Jane took Georgiannamore along with her into the house; if she hadn't—but then, that's getting ahead of the story.

The little girls had no more than gone inside before Mrs. Merrill, Alice and Frances turned the corner and strolled along toward the Holden house.

"Funny where those girls have gone," said Frances, looking at the empty porch.

"They've hid our Taffy Apples somewhere, I just know they have!" said Alice. "Frances, we ought to be smart enough to find them so quickly they won't try teasing again."

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"I don't believe they've hidden the apples," said Frances thoughtfully, "because Betty would be so hungry she wouldn't bother with teasing till after she was through eating. Maybe they've gone into the house to get Betty's doll and cart."

"But why would they bother to take Mary Jane's cart indoors if Betty was just going in for her doll?" asked Alice.

Before Frances or Mrs. Merrill could suggest an answer, the two little girls themselves came out of the front door, turned to look at the porch and then stood there, as though fastened to the floor—they were that surprised.

"Why—why—" said Mary Jane, "I left it right here!"

"Well, nobody ever stole anything before," said Betty. "Maybe the boys just hid it!"

"No, they didn't," replied Frances, "because they haven't come home from school yet. They stopped to see Jimmie's new chicken house and they won't be home for an hour."

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"What's the trouble?" asked Mrs. Holden, who, hearing voices, came to the front door to invite folks in for a visit.

"Trouble enough, Mother," said Frances, worriedly. "Mary Jane left her brand new doll cart on our porch and it's gone!"

"And we just went in to get my doll," explained Betty, getting very excited. "We just went in a little minute and then we were going to eat the taffy apples and now they're gone too—oh, dear!"

At that minute, yes, things really do happen this way sometimes, who should go by the house but the big friendly policeman who always stood at the street corner nearest the school to guard the children from swiftly moving autos. Betty spied him and ran down the walk to speak to him.

"So the cart's gone, is it?" he said as he and Betty came up toward the house. "Well, if you'll let me use your 'phone, I'll tell them down at the station just what kind of a cart it is and maybe we can get a trace of it—anyway, we can try."

Mrs. Holden went indoors with him and

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the others stood around on the porch hardly knowing what to do. Loosing her cart was a real calamity to poor Mary Jane—she very well knew that her father couldn't afford to get her another one and she had hard work, awfully hard work, to keep back the tears that came to her eyes and to swallow the lump that filled her throat. She didn't want to be a crybaby, but—and the lump got bigger and bigger—

Mrs. Merrill noticed that Mary Jane was trying so very hard to be brave so she did her best to help.

"Wasn't it lucky that officer came by just then!" she said cheerfully. "I can't for the life of me see why anybody would be mean enough to steal a little girl's doll cart and I keep thinking we'll find it somewhere. Come on, Mary Jane, let's sit down on this settee here till Mrs. Holden comes out. Then perhaps some of you girls will be good enough to go up to the candy shop with me and get some more taffy apples—I suppose those went with the cart!"

Mary Jane stepped over toward her

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mother, who had already seated herself on the settee at the end of the porch. But before she sat down she just happened to look down toward the ground. The Holden porch had no railing around the side and as Mary Jane was always a little timid about falling she kept a close watch on the end of the porch every time she went near it. She glanced down at the ground and then—her face changed! The sorrowful look vanished and smiles spread like sunshine over her face.

"Look!" she exclaimed, as she pointed to the ground. "Look there!"

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A TRIP TO THE ZOO

IT wasn't hard to guess what Mary Jane had found; nothing but her precious doll cart could have made her feel and look so happy. They all ran to the end of the porch, looked over the edge, and there, sure enough, was the birthday cart all tumbled down in a heap. Alice and Frances jumped down, set it up straight and then, with Mrs. Merrill's help from above, lifted it up to the porch just as the policeman and Mrs. Holden came out of the house.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the officer. "Another cart?"

"No, it's mine!" cried Mary Jane happily. She ran her hands over the hood, the body part and then the wheels to make sure nothing was broken. Everything seemed all right, even the bag of taffy apples was still tucked under the carriage robe that had come loose but had not fallen clear out.

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"Yours?" asked the officer. "But I thought yours was lost!"

"It was," admitted Mary Jane, "but it isn't any more."

Mrs. Merrill hastened to explain that the cart had just then been discovered on the ground at the end of the porch.

"I know what was the trouble," said Frances, "she didn't fasten the brake—did you, Mary Jane?"

Mary Jane and the policeman bent down to inspect the brake. No, it wasn't fastened.

"It wouldn't take much of a breeze to blow that cart off the porch, young lady," said the officer, laughingly, "and so I suggest that if you ever want to leave your doll in the cart, you'd better be sure the brake is locked. You might have a smashed doll instead of a lost cart to report and then things wouldn't be so easy to straighten out!" And with a pleasant good-by he went on about his business.

Left alone the two mothers looked at each other and laughed—such an easy ending to

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disappointment didn't often come! The four girls made a dive for the bag of apples and settled themselves on the broad front steps for a few minutes of real enjoyment. Mary Jane found that taffy apples were a lot of fun to eat. The hard, slick surface was delicious to "lick" and then, when a small part was licked thin, it was fun to bite right straight through to the apple.

"If you think they're good now," said Frances, "you should taste them in the fall when the fresh apples are in—yummy-um!"

"These are good enough for me," said Betty contentedly and she bit off a big chunk of apple.

"Betty Holden!" exclaimed Frances with big sisterly chagrin, "you look like a monkey with that apple all over your face!"

"Oh, fiddle!" replied Betty indifferently, "I like monkeys."

"Did you ever see one?" asked Mary Jane, "a really truly live one?"

Betty stared. "Why of course!" she answered, "haven't you?"

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Mary Jane shook her head.

"Well then you ought to go up to the Zoo," she said positively, "let's all go." She jumped up and ran over to her mother. "Mother!" she announced, "Mary Jane's never seen a monkey—never! Can't we take her up to the Zoo and show 'em to her?"

"Never seen a monkey!" exclaimed Mrs. Holden and she was as surprised as Betty had been, "are you sure?"

"Yes, Betty's right," said Mrs. Merrill. "Mary Jane has seen a great many things for a little girl who has just had her sixth birthday. But she hasn't seen a monkey. Her father and I were saying only last night that we must take the girls up to the Zoo as soon as possible."

"Let's all go next Saturday," suggested Mrs. Holden, "no, we can't go next Saturday because the girls and I have some shopping to do. Let's go a week from Saturday. By that time the restaurant in Lincoln Park will be open. The way we do," she explained to the Merrills, "is to take our lunch,

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a picnic lunch, with us. We start up about eleven, eat over by the lake and then have the whole afternoon for watching the animals; we eat dinner in that nice restaurant, before dark, and then come home in the early evening. Can you all go on that day?"

Mrs. Merrill said she was sure they could, so plans were made right then and there.

Mary Jane and Alice thought those two weeks, or nearly two weeks, never would pass. Of course there was the doll cart to play with and Mary Jane loved it exactly as much as ever. But she did want to see the monkeys, and the foxes (Betty told her she would love the foxes!) and all the creatures that Betty seemed to know so much about and which she had never even seen.

But at last the morning came, warm and sunny and clear and the lunch boxes were packed, the apartment locked up and everybody started toward Lincoln Park feeling happy and ready for fun. The fathers couldn't come for lunch, but really when all the Holden girls and boys were added to the

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three Merrills, there was such a crowd that, for the time at least, fathers weren't so very much missed.

When they reached the park Mary Jane realized, for the first time, how close it was getting to really truly summer. The sun shone with real summer warmth, the lake was blue and beautiful and flowers bloomed on every corner.

"Oh, I'd just like to live in a park all the time," she exclaimed as she looked around her, "it seems just like home!"

"Yes, it does," said Mrs. Merrill, with a wee bit of a sigh, "I'm afraid I know some folks who are going to miss their gardens and flower bed this summer."

"How stupid of me not to have thought of that!" exclaimed Mrs. Holden. "You know it will be just two weeks now till we go up to the lake for all the summer. Why didn't I think to have you plant stuff in our back garden? Then you could have all the garden you liked right there handy—we always do hate to leave the ground idle."

"Perhaps we might plant something even

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yet," suggested Mrs. Merrill, much delighted with the idea, "we'd love to try."

But there was no time for further planning just then—John Holden demanded his lunch; Betty made a lively second and in a minute or two a clean grassy place was picked out, the individual lunch boxes were passed out and then, for a few minutes, everybody was quiet.

"I'm going to feed the black bear," announced Betty, as she paused to pick out another sandwich, "I'm going to feed him peanuts—I saved up enough money for two bagsful."

"But aren't you afraid of him?" asked Mary Jane breathlessly.

"Afraid? Pooh!" grunted Betty.

"Never you mind, Mary Jane," said Linn comfortingly, "she was afraid the first time she saw him and I remember all about it. But now she's learned that he can't get out the cage."

"Now, Linn, I never—" began Betty.

But John interrupted. "There!" he said, "I'm through. Come on, let's gather up the

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boxes and papers and stick 'em in the trash box on the way to get the peanuts." So the children all helped and in a jiffy the pretty, grassy spot where they had eaten lunch was as clean and tidy as when they came. And then away they scampered after the peanuts.

Such an afternoon as it was! Mary Jane tried to remember each thing they did so she could tell her father when he met them after three o'clock. But she couldn't remember half what they had done. She knew they saw the little foxes—such pretty, dainty white and tan colored foxes that played together like little pet kittens and made her want to hold them in her lap and pet them. She knew they saw the bears—great big bears and middle sized bears and little bit o' bears just like in the story book, and she fed them peanuts which they caught very deftly in their soft cushioned paws. But all the rest, she really couldn't remember in the right order—there were kangaroos and buffaloes and a giraffe who stuck his long neck over the top of a great high fence and made

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Mary Jane think of nothing so much as a funny paper picture. And then of course the monkeys—dozens of them and queer birds with curious colored feathers and funny bills and feet. Really, she had seen in that one afternoon, more animals than she had guessed lived in the whole world, oh, many more!

"But have you seen the seals?" asked Mr. Merrill who met them at the bird house.

No, they hadn't.

"It's almost four o'clock," said Mr. Merrill, looking at his watch, "and Mr. Holden said they ate at four and we should meet him there, so let's hurry."

It was a good thing they did hurry for other folks seemed to know, too, that the seals were fed at four. From all directions, folks could be seen walking toward the big enclosed pond where the seals were kept. But, by hurrying, they got there in time to stand close to the iron fence where they could see the antics of those queerest of animals, the seals.

One would suppose that even the seals

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knew it was nearly four o'clock, dinner time, for they were so excited and eager. They barked and swam and flung themselves around vigorously as though they could hardly stand waiting for anything. Then, just at four, a man came out of a near-by building. In his hand he carried a basket of fish—a great, well-filled basket. He came over to a little platform close by where the Merrill and Holden children were standing; so they could see everything.

He picked up a big fish, tossed it over into the rocky island in the middle of the seals' pond and then! such a scrambling as there was till the middle-sized seal with a few ungainly flops, grabbed the fish and gulped it down in one bite.

Then he threw another fish and another and another—one after the other so fast that Mary Jane felt sure the seals must get all mixed up about catching them. But they didn't. Those seals must have been smarter than folks had thought for they seemed to know, every time, just about where the fish was to hit on the rocks and to know, too,

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just how to get to that particular spot the quickest. Mary Jane thought it very wonderful.

But one thing worried her. There was one small seal, who for some reason or other, seemed to be always just a second too late to get a fish. Mary Jane was sure he had had but one and all the others had had, oh, a lot. And she couldn't help wishing all the others wouldn't be quite so grabby.

When the man who was feeding the seals got almost to the bottom of his big basket, he stopped and looked at the crowd of children assembled for the feeding. And as he looked, he spied Mary Jane's sober little face.

"Don't you like to watch them?" he asked her in surprise.

"Yes, I like to only they're so grabby," she replied promptly, "and he hasn't had but one." She pointed out the little seal who was a bit too slow.

"We'll fix that," said the keeper, kindly, "you just watch."

He tossed a great big fish close to the

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crowd of waiting seals, then, quick as a flash and before they had had time to get that one, he tossed another, straight at the little seal who was on the edge of the crowd.

"He got it! He got it!" cried Mary Jane happily, "he got it before they had a chance!"

"And he's going to get another," said the keeper as he threw another and still another, straight at the hungry little seal. "There!" he added as he looked at the now empty basket, "that ought to do him till to-morrow." Mary Jane thought he looked so comfortable now that surely he had had as much as he needed for the day.

"Better hurry if we're to see the lions eat," said Mr. Holden, who during the seals' dining hour had come up behind his little party.

"Lions!" exclaimed Mary Jane.

"Yes, hurry up!" called Betty and she and her brother who were quite familiar with the park because of many previous visits, ran on toward a big brick house near by.

Mary Jane wasn't afraid, but all the same

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she thought it would be more fun to hold her father's hand and even though they were a bit behind, they got into the lions' house in time.

Here the dinner was of meat, great big chunks of raw, red meat that the keepers tossed into the cages. And it was so funny to watch! Just before the keeper appeared, the lions and tigers and jackals and leopards were pacing up and down their cages with such weird roars and grunts and growls that Mary Jane held tightly to her father's hand and didn't go very close to the iron bars. But when the keepers appeared with the meat there was a wild scramble, and then silence except for the crunching and smacking of eating. It certainly was different, oh, very, very different from anything Mary Jane had ever seen before!

"Let's not wait here any more," suggested Alice, "let's show Dadah the monkeys."

"Yes, and the foxes—the white ones," said Mary Jane, "they're my favorites of all."

But before they had had time to show Mr.

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Merrill every single creature they had seen, the Holden boys announced that they were hungry and that it was long past dinner time. And sure enough! Even though it wasn't really long *past* dinner time, it *was* half past five—the time they had agreed upon for dinner. So a very jolly party seated themselves at a big round table on a second story porch of the Park restaurant. That was the nicest place to eat Mary Jane had ever seen—unless perhaps a diner on a train. For after they gave their order, she discovered that they could look right down on a small lake where ducks and geese and swans lived. The children got so interested watching the pretty creatures that for once they didn't have time to think the waiter was slow!

They stayed there eating and watching the birds, till the sun set back of the trees. Then, when there wasn't another scrap of cake or teaspoonful of ice cream left, they gathered up wraps and hats and started for home.

"I know one thing," said sleepy Mary

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Jane as they waited for the bus that was to take them to their train. "I know there're a lot more animal folks in the world than I thought for—oh, a lot more! And I think I'd better come again to see them all."

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A DAY IN THE PARKS

A WHOLE long vacation begun! Alice home all day and plenty of time for walks and playing together! It seemed almost too good to be true. For although Alice was several years older than her sister Mary Jane, the two girls had always had very happy times playing together and they had missed each other very much during school days. Now that the Holden family was away, for they went off, bag and baggage, to their country home up in Wisconsin the very day school closed, the two girls had no one near by to play with, so more than ever before they needed and enjoyed each other's company. Frances Westland had gone back to the country and the Merrill girls had not made friends with any one who lived near enough to make a convenient playmate.

They didn't do as some girls and boys do

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in vacation, get up late in the morning. No, they thought it was more fun to get up promptly and have breakfast with Dadah and then, when the afternoon got hot, as often happened, they took a nice long rest and dressed fresh and clean for dinner. On many a day Mrs. Merrill packed a basket of dinner and they met Mr. Merrill over by the park, had their dinner near one of the small lagoons or close to the big lake. After dinner they played ball or tennis—Alice was learning to be very good at tennis.

"I wish there were swans in our park," said Mary Jane as she sat on the edge of the lagoon and watched the row boats and the electric launches gliding about on the water. "I liked those swans at Lincoln Park."

"I was just thinking to-day," said Mr. Merrill, "we haven't seen all the parks and I promised you, that you should see them —all the big ones anyway. I wonder when we could go, mother?"

"I wonder *how* we could go," said Mrs. Merrill, "the parks are so far apart that a

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journey through them all would be a hopeless task, seems to me."

"Depends on how you do it," laughed Mr. Merrill. "I'll tell you what I thought. I'll take the whole day away from the office so as to go along. We'll start fairly early and take the elevated out to Garfield Park —you know we promised the girls a trip on the elevated and we've always taken the train! We'll see that park well, you know it has gardens and greenhouses and lakes, and then we'll get a taxi and go to two or three other parks and ride home."

The girls thought that was a wonderful plan and they wanted to set the day for that very same week. So Thursday was decided upon.

"Now there's one thing besides getting a good lunch ready that I want you folks to do," said Mr. Merrill as they picked up their baskets and balls ready to go home, "I want you to get out that map of Chicago we had on the train the day we came up here and find just where Garfield Park is and how we get there and how many interesting sights

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like rivers and parks and boulevards we pass on the way." And of course the girls promised that they would find the map and get all that information first thing in the morning.

Riding on the elevated proved to be great fun. Mary Jane was afraid for a few minutes she wasn't going to like it—the stairs were so very high up with holes in each step to see down to the ground; and the train dashed to the platform with such a roar and bustle and people crowded on and jerk! the train rushed off. But when she settled down in the seat, comfortingly near her mother, and looked out over the roofs of houses and stores, and down long streets, one after another, she found she wasn't a bit afraid and that she liked it very much. She liked watching for children on folks' back porches. Some played on the porch and some played in the dining-room windows—it was easy to tell which were the dining-room windows because always there were three big windows and always she could look right through the curtains and see the

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big table in the middle of the room. The only trouble with watching folks from an elevated was that the train dashed by so quickly she couldn't any more than see, till —flash, flash, and they were gone and there was another street and another set of back stairs and some different children playing. It really was awfully queer.

Pretty soon they reached the big down town and there they got off their train, climbed over a big bridge to another elevated train and away they went whizzing again. It certainly was a queer way to travel, Mary Jane thought.

But finally father announced that they had come to Garfield Park, so they got off, walked down the stairs to a park that looked so much like their own park that Mary Jane had to rub her eyes and look twice to make sure she wasn't dreaming. Here were the same winding driveways, beautiful trees and small lakes.

"Did we come back to our Park?" she asked in surprise.

"Oh, no," answered Alice who had run on

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a little ahead, "look at the big greenhouse and look back there! Now don't you see the swans?"

No, it wasn't their own neighborhood park, Mary Jane soon realized that, because there were many new things to be seen. The wonderful tropical greenhouse where palms and bananas and wonderful ferns such as the girls had seen in Florida were growing. And then there were beautiful out of door gardens—Mary Jane liked those even better than the greenhouse gardens, wonderful as those were. She seemed to feel, someway, as though the flowers must like the out of doors better.

Right in the middle of the many lovely flower beds in the out of doors gardens, there was a lily pool in which grew water lilies of all colors and sorts. Mary Jane had never seen water lilies before and she thought them very lovely—and rather queer too, if the truth must be told. She decided she would stay right there a while and let Alice and her father explore the rest of the gardens—they wanted to know names of flowers and

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names didn't seem a bit interesting to the little girl.

Just after she had decided to stay there and play, she spied a boy of about her age who was watching the lilies too.

"Can you walk all the way around the edge?" he asked her.

"Edge of what?" asked Mary Jane.

"The edge of the pool," he replied, "see," and he put his foot up on the stone rim of the pool, "all the way around on this."

"Can you?" asked Mary Jane. She wanted to see what he would say before she answered his question.

"Sure!" he replied, "it's just as easy! Only girls are 'fraidies."

"I guess I'm not," declared Mary Jane firmly, "watch!" She stepped up on the stone rim—it was about eight inches wide—and walked boldly along toward the middle of the long side of the pool.

"You can, can't you," said the boy admiringly.

"Just as easy," replied Mary Jane, for

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when she found she could do what he had asked she was anxious to have it appear to be as easy for her as for him.

"Come on," the boy suggested, "let's race!"

"Race?" asked Mary Jane, "how?"

"'Round the pool. You start this way, and I'll start that way and the one that gets around home first beats."

"All right," agreed Mary Jane, "let's."

Now before Mary Jane saw the boy by the pool, Mrs. Merrill spied some very beautiful grasses over at one side of the gardens; the very sort of grasses, she decided, that Mary Jane's grandmother would like to use in her flower beds by the driveways. And of course she wanted to find out the names of the grasses so she could write to grandmother about them. Seeing that Mary Jane was so absorbed in the pool and the lilies, she slipped over to look at the name sign which she knew would be stuck right by the roots. She jotted the name down in her note book, looked along at a few others and—turned back to the pool just

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in time to see her small daughter and a strange boy run racingly along the rim of the pool straight at each other.

"Mary Jane! Mary Jane!" she called, "jump down onto the ground! Jump down!"

Whether Mary Jane heard her and became confused, or whether the boy's bumping into her made her lose her balance, nobody ever quite found out. But anyway, right before Mrs. Merrill's astonished eyes, Mary Jane Merrill tumbled 'kplump—into the lily pool!

Fortunately the lily pool wasn't very deep so Mary Jane didn't fall far. But she did hit the bottom pretty hard; so hard that when she bobbed up, her head out of water and her feet on the bottom, she hardly knew what had happened to her.

Mrs. Merrill screamed and Mr. Merrill, Alice, three policemen and about twenty other people came running to see what had happened. It wasn't necessary for anybody to jump in and make a triumphant rescue for Mary Jane was so close to shore that Mrs.

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Merrill had taken firm hold of her hand and pulled her out just as all the folks got there. So there was nothing for them to do but to stare and to ask questions.

"How did she do it?" asked the first policeman.

"Hurt you any?" asked the second.

"You and your mother come with me," said the third (and Mary Jane guessed right away from his voice that he must have some little girls of his own), "and I'll show you where you can dry your clothes."

The procession of policemen and onlookers, led by a very wet and greatly embarrassed little girl, crossed the gardens, crossed the street and went into a comfortable big building. There a kindly matron produced a big bathrobe in which Mary Jane sat while her dress was wrung out and dried. And wasn't she glad there was a good hot sun so things could dry quickly!

Finally, when Mary Jane was beginning to get awfully hungry, mother announced that the clothes were dry and that she had pulled and stretched them the best she could

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in the place of ironing. So Mary Jane dressed and they went in search of Alice and her father.

"Well, you certainly do mix up baths with your picnics," laughed Mr. Merrill when he saw them coming. "Remember the time you fell into Clearwater, Pussy?"

"But it isn't so bad, really, Dadah," said Mary Jane, "and I'm not wet now."

"So your're not," said Mr. Merrill, "but *I* am hungry—anybody agree with me?"

They all admitted to being nearly starved, so they found a pretty, grassy spot close by the lake on which several beautiful swans were sunning themselves, and there they spread out the luncheon they had brought. At first the girls were so hungry they didn't want to do anything but eat. But by the time they had eaten a plateful of potato salad and three or four sandwiches, the swans discovered their lunching place and came to call. Evidently swans were used to being treated very nicely by folks who came to the park for they didn't seem to have a trace of fear of strangers.

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The girls tossed the crusts of the sandwiches to the edge of the water and the swans bent their long necks and picked them up and ate them, every crust, so daintily just as though crusts were a diet fit for kings —and swans. The swans didn't actually come out of the water, but they came so close to the shore that the girls could almost touch them and they soon got to feeling very well acquainted.

So it was with some regret that they heard Mr. Merrill say, "Well, girls, weren't we to see some of the other parks too?" And here it was four o'clock!

The basket was packed—and there wasn't a scrap of anything a swan could eat, you may be sure of that—and they strolled down to the roadway. In a minute or two Mr. Merrill hailed a passing taxi and they settled themselves for a nice long ride.

They didn't stop at any other park; Mary Jane was sure no other could be as interesting as the one where she had had such exciting experiences and Alice was quite as content as her father and mother to sit back,

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cool and comfortable, and see the beautiful flowers and shrubbery slip past them. So they rode and rode through one park after another, it seemed, till suddenly Mary Jane spied something that looked familiar.

"That's my Midway!" she announced, as the car turned into the long, broad stretch of parkway near their own home.

"Sure enough it is!" exclaimed Mr. Merrill in pretended amazement, "we'll have to turn around and go back!"

"No we won't," said Mary Jane, "we'll go home."

So they went on home, just in time to cook a good warm dinner and to talk over and over again the many things they had seen in the parks.

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VISITORS—AND A BOAT RIDE

ONE day, not so very long after the trip through the parks, the bell at the Merrills' front door pealed long and hard. Mary Jane, whose job was answering the door, ran to the little house 'phone, and heard a loud voice shout, "Special for Merrill!"

"What's he mean, mother?" she asked, in a puzzled voice.

"Better press the buzzer and let him in, dear," replied Mrs. Merrill, "if he has the name right he must have something for us."

So Mary Jane pressed the downstairs buzzer and then opened the front door. Yes, it was for them—a special delivery letter for Mrs. Merrill. Mary Jane and Alice were much excited and could hardly wait till the messenger's book was signed and the letter was opened.

"It's from grandma," said Mrs. Merrill as

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she glanced at the writing, "and listen! This is what she says:

" 'Grandpa finds quite unexpectedly that he must come to Chicago on business and he says that if it's convenient to you folks I can come along and we'll stay two or three days for a visit. Please wire reply because we must start Wednesday evening.' "

"And it's ten o'clock Wednesday morning now!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill. She hurried to the telephone, called Mr. Merrill so he could send a telegram at once, then she and the two girls went right to work making ready for the guests.

It was decided that Alice and Mary Jane should sleep on couches and give up their room to the visitors. "Now's when I wish we had our nice guest room," said Mrs. Merrill, "but then, grandma knows that folks who live in Chicago flats don't keep guest rooms for infrequent visitors." For her part, Mary Jane thought sleeping on a couch would be great fun—so grown up and different from every day. She was to have the dining-room couch and Alice was to sleep in

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the living-room. When all plans were made, bedding sorted out and laid ready for making up the beds fresh first thing in the morning, Mrs. Merrill began planning the meals. If the visitors were to stay only a short time she wanted to have as much baking and marketing as possible done beforehand, so every minute could be spent in fun and visiting. Alice and Mary Jane, who had been marketing so much with their mother of late that they really could be trusted, took a long list up to the grocery and Mrs. Merrill set to work baking coffeecake and bread and cookies. Um-m! It wasn't an hour till that tiny kitchen began to smell so good that the girls could hardly be coaxed away. Mrs. Merrill let them help in a good many ways. Mary Jane put the sugar and nuts on the tops of the cookies after her mother put them in the pan and Alice, who was getting to be a really good cook, tended to the baking. She put the big pans in, and watched the baking, and took them out when every cookie was evenly browned. Then, after she took a pan out of the oven, she

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gently lifted the hot cookies out from the baking pan onto a wire rack where they could cool without losing their pretty shapes. When the cookies were cool, it was Mary Jane's turn again. She put them all in the tin cookie box, counting them and laying them neatly between layers of parafin paper so they would keep fresh even in the hot weather.

It was a rule that only perfect cookies should be packed away—scraps never went into the tin box. But for some reason or other, the girls never seemed to mind the job of eating the broken ones! In fact Mary Jane often asked Alice *not* to be so careful—to please break a few so there would be plenty to eat right then and there.

The day went by so quickly that it was bed time before the girls realized it—and then, after about forty winks, it was morning—the morning when grandma and grandpa were coming.

Everybody was up early, Alice and Mary Jane made up the beds fresh and neat, mother cooked a good breakfast and Dadah

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went to the train, at a near-by suburban station, to meet the travelers. It was a jolly party that sat around the breakfast table—you may be sure of that!

"Now then," said Mr. Merrill, when the breakfast was eaten up and news of the farm had been told, "I'll have to go to work and I suppose grandpa has to do his business to-day, so we'll leave you folks to yourselves. Then to-morrow, if grandpa is through his business, we can plan some fun."

So the two business folks went down town and grandma was left to enjoy life at home. The girls were glad she could stay.

"Let's take grandma over to the lake," suggested Alice, "I know you'd love riding in one of those little electric launches, grandmother."

"Let's take some lunch and not come home till she's seen everything in Chicago," said Mary Jane in a rush of hospitality.

"Dear me! Child!" exclaimed grandma in dismay, "don't you know there's another day coming!"

Mary Jane agreed to leave a few sights

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for the next day, but she didn't want to lose any time getting off. Fortunately the morning work didn't take but a tiny bit of time, and as grandma, who didn't care much for "stuffy sleepers," was very glad to get out into the fresh air, they very soon were on their way to the park.

The girls felt quite at home in the neighborhood and in the park by this time, and they thought it was great fun to show the sights to somebody else—somebody who didn't know all about Chicago. Grandma loved the beautiful Midway, the charming lagoons and she enjoyed her ride on the little launch fully as much as the girls had thought she would.

"But don't you have any *big* boats?" she asked, "great big ones with two decks and lots of passengers and all that? I'd like to ride on a big boat too."

"Then that's exactly what we'll do to-morrow, mother," said Mrs. Merrill. "There is a big boat that runs from Jackson Park up to the municipal pier. We'll go on it to-morrow and we'll get our lunch up

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town and then we'll come back home on the boat."

And that's exactly what they did.

When Mr. Merrill heard that grandma wanted a ride on a big boat, the plans for the next day were as good as made. He thought the idea of going to town on the boat and then getting lunch and coming home was a fine one and he only made one change in the plan.

"Instead of going to a store, in the loop, let's take one of the little launches that run from the Municipal pier to Lincoln Park and go up there for our lunch so grandma can see your favorite swans and perhaps, if we want to stay that long, see the seals get their four o'clock tea." But dear me, he little guessed what would happen as his nice-sounding plan worked out!

So the next morning, the Merrills all had a nice, leisurely, visity breakfast, then a walk through the park, and never did the park look lovelier than on the sunny summer morning, and then, boarding the boat that rocked at the pier on the big lake, they

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found comfortable seats on the shady side and prepared for a pleasant ride.

Mary Jane chose to sit on the side nearest the pier because she loved to look down from the upper deck and watch the people boarding the boat. She had never ridden on boats very much, only when she went to Florida, and this boat they were now aboard seemed very different from the big, awkward, flat bottomed boat they took their river trip on through Florida jungles.

"You don't need to sit by me if you want to talk to mother," she said to her father.

"Humph!" said her father teasingly, "how do I know you're not going to tumble overboard! You know you have a way of mixing up picnics and water, Mary Jane, so I don't think I'll take any chances." But when Mary Jane promised that she would sit very still and not walk around a step and not lean over the edge, he went to speak to grandpa a few minutes. And while he was gone, Mary Jane leaned up against the side of the boat and watched the folks down on the pier.

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She thought it must surely be about time for the boat to start because there was hurrying on the pier, and men were busy taking ropes off of the big wooden posts along the side nearest the water. While she was watching, a woman came along the dock toward the boat and with her were two little children, a girl about Mary Jane's own age and a little boy some two years younger. Just as they reached the gang plank, ready to step onto the boat, the little boy began to cry.

"I left my boat! I left my boat! I left my boat!" he cried. Mary Jane could hear him very plainly even though she sat so far up above him.

She couldn't hear what the mother said, but evidently she promised to get the missing boat for him, because she left both children by the side of the gang-plank, and hurrying as fast as possible she ran back toward the shore. And right at that minute, the big bell overhead rang three times and the engine aboard the boat began to throb —it was time to go.

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The men on the dock noticed the two children and one said to the little girl, "Were you going?" and she nodded yes. So he picked up the boy and hurried the two children aboard just as the gang plank was hauled in and the boat made away from the pier.

Mary Jane was so thrilled and excited she could hardly sit still. She tried to call her father but he was on the other side of the boat and she had promised to sit still—perfectly still—till he came back. What in the world was a little girl to do? And back on the shore that was so rapidly getting farther and farther way, Mary Jane could see the mother of the children, running frantically toward the dock which the boat had left. Surely the captain would see her, Mary Jane thought. But if he did, he likely thought she was merely somebody who had missed the boat and that he had no time for turning back. And so the boat continued out into the lake.

Finally after what seemed the *longest* time (though it really was hardly more than

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five minutes), Mr. Merrill came back and then, such a story as he heard!

"Are you sure, Mary Jane?" he asked, "certain sure? The men wouldn't put children on a boat without grown folks along!"

"But they did, Dadah!" insisted Mary Jane, "I saw 'em!"

"Then you come with me," said Mr. Merrill, "and we'll see if we can find them."

So Mr. Merrill and Mary Jane went down the stairs, and that took some time because folks were coming and going and getting settled for the trip, and there, huddled close together and crying as hard as they could cry, were the two little waifs!

Mary Jane with real motherliness began talking to the little girl; Mr. Merrill picked up the boy and together the whole party went in search of the captain. By the time he was found though, the boat was still farther on its journey toward the city and the dock they started from was farther and farther behind.

"Well, that is a time we were wrong," admitted the captain when he had listened to

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all Mary Jane had to say and talked with the man who had put the children aboard. "But even though we were wrong, we can't go back now. We'll have to make the children comfortable and take them back to their mother on the return trip."

So Mr. Merrill and Mary Jane went back to the deck, only this time they took with them the two little strangers. Mrs. Merrill was told the story and she and Alice and Mary Jane, with help from grandma, grandpa and Mr. Merrill, set themselves to the task of making the little children happy. At first it was hard work, because they cried all the time for their mother. But erelong they understood the friendliness around them and they stopped crying and began to have a good time. Grandpa discovered some crackerjack and everybody knows what a help *that* is; Mrs. Merrill told some funny stories and Mr. Merrill took them all over the boat—to see the great engine and everything. Then there were the sights to watch from the deck and the big buildings to count and the boats they passed to watch—oh,

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there surely was a lot to do that made that trip interesting and so very short.

As the boat pulled up near the down town pier, the Merrills saw a taxi dash up near where the boat was to land: saw a woman get out and, followed by a policeman, hurry up to the side where the boat would pull in.

"Look!" exclaimed Mary Jane excitedly. "Look!"

The little girl, whose name was Ann, looked along with the others, and then she gave a happy cry.

"Mother!" she shouted, so loudly that her mother, waiting on the pier could hear and was so very relieved!

When the boat pulled into the dock, the captain was the first one to step off; he met the mother and the officer and brought them aboard at once. Mary Jane was called upon to explain all that she had seen and the officer, as well as the mother, was satisfied that the whole thing was an accident and not an attempt to steal the children.

"But how did you get up here so quickly?"

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asked Mary Jane, when the first excitement was over.

"My dear child!" laughed Ann's mother, "a person can do a lot when she thinks something is happening to her children! I took a passing taxi, dashed to a police station and then on up here. And nothing has happened at all—except you nice people have given my little folks a very pleasant trip. Next time, Bobby," she added, "we'll leave your toy boat or we'll all go together to find it. We won't take any chances of losing each other!"

"Well," laughed Mr. Merrill when the mother and children and officer and captain had all gone on about their own business, "what was it we were going to do to-day?"

Everybody laughed at that! They had been so excited that they had forgotten, yes, actually forgotten, that this was a sight-seeing trip for grandma and grandpa. But once they remembered, they knew just what to do. They climbed aboard a waiting launch, rode up to Lincoln Park, had a wonderful dinner and fun all the rest of the day.

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"I don't see," remarked grandma, as they neared home, late that evening, "how you girls are ever going to settle down to school again! Did you know that school was only a few weeks away? Vacation will be over before you know it!"

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SCHOOL BEGINS

WHEN grandma suggested that it was nearly time for school to begin, on that day of the boat ride, she guessed better than the girls suspected. At the time they laughed and thought she was joking, but, after she and grandpa had gone home, they got out a calendar and counted up and there, to be sure, only one and one-half weeks of vacation were left.

"I didn't realize school began so early," exclaimed Mrs. Merrill in dismay.

"I thought summer was a long time!" cried Alice, "but it isn't any time at all!"

"Goody! Goody! Goody!" Mary Jane said happily, "then I get to start to school like a big girl."

It was no wonder Mary Jane was happy, for she remembered that the plan was for her to start in the really truly school, not the kindergarten where she had gone in her other

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home, and any little girl likes to start to school like her big sister.

When the day finally came, Alice was as much excited as Mary Jane herself. For although the summer had been so pleasant she almost hated to see it end—the free days with plenty of time for visits with mother and picnics and marketing and all—still, school was pleasant too and any little girl who does nice work and tries to learn, will make good friends and have happy days, just as Alice always had had.

Mary Jane had a hard time deciding which dress to wear. She wanted to look very grown up, so that teacher would realize she was a big girl, so she finally decided upon a dark blue sailor suit. The one that had the red insignia on the sleeve and that looked just like a big girl's dress. With a clean 'kerchief peeking out of her pocket and a smashing big red bow on the top of her brown head, she looked very nice.

Alice and Mary Jane waked up that morning the very minute they were called for they wanted to help mother so she could

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go over to school with them. And with all that good help of course they were off on time. Alice was glad to have company going to school for Frances wasn't home yet and wouldn't be there for a couple of weeks.

Mary Jane's heart went thump, thump as she and her mother went in at the teachers' gate, and up the stairs and into the principal's office. And thump, thump some more when she saw the whole roomful of strange boys and girls and thump,thump some more when her turn came and she was sent (fortunately with her mother along) to the first grade room—number 104. The room was full of children, hundreds, Mary Jane thought there must be, though the teacher told Mrs. Merrill there were about forty-five. And if her heart went thump, thump before, it certainly went thump, thump, *thump* when the teacher, smiling at her so kindly, gave her a seat in the—front-row —such a nice seat for her very own! and she sat down and tried to look as though she had been used to going to school all her whole life.

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For a minute she couldn't look around or anything, she felt so queer. Then she glanced at the next seat and there, sitting right beside her, was—whom do you suppose? Ann! The same pretty little Ann who had been lost on the boat. Immediately Mary Jane forgot all about being afraid and thumping hearts and strangeness and everything and began to like school. The two little girls had much to say about what they would do at recess and where did they live and everything, so the time before school began passed very quickly.

Suddenly, in the midst of their talk, a bell rang, "GONG-GONG!" Two loud tones close together that way, and school began. Mary Jane Merrill was in a really truly school like the big girl she was getting to be.

Ann came home with Mary Jane that first afternoon and Mrs. Merrill discovered that her name was Ann Ellis and that she lived two blocks from their own home and that the two little girls would no doubt find it very easy to be friends. They began hav-

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ing a good time that very afternoon and they planned still better times when Betty would be back and they could all play together. Now wasn't that fine!

Mary Jane found that she liked school every bit as much as she had thought she would. She liked her teacher, a charming Miss Treavor, and she liked her studies. But most of all she liked the fun she had on the playground. In the big cities, like Chicago, where lots of girls and boys have no yards, the school yards are the only places were children can play. So, to make everything safe and orderly, the school folks have a playground teacher stay at school all the day, to help in the games and to see that every one has a happy time. The playground teacher at Mary Jane's school liked little girls very much and she knew many good games for them to play. So in addition to "London Bridge" and "Drop the Handkerchief" and "Tag" that all children play, Mary Jane learned "Roman Soldiers" and "Ghost Walk" and "Three times Three."

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Of the new ones, Mary Jane liked "Ghost Walk" the best. To play it, the girls and boys made a big circle, then they selected some one to be "Ghost." This person stood in the middle of the circle and everybody shut eyes tight, very tight. Then the Ghost, while every one kept very quiet, tried to tip-toe to the edge of the circle, slip out between two folks and get away without being caught. That may sound easy, but played in a yard full of romping boys and girls, it is not really as easy as it might seem and it was lots of fun, because often folks would think the "Ghost" was near them and would try to grab—and the joke was on them because all the while, maybe, the "ghost" was in another part of the ring. And whenever folks thought they caught the "Ghost" and *didn't*, then every one opened their eyes, the person who had made the mistake had to get out of the circle and the game began again. But if the "Ghost" really did get out of the circle without being caught, then the "Ghost" could hide anywhere in the yard and the game became

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an old-fashioned hide-and-seek with everybody hunting one lucky person.

One day, when Mary Jane was "Ghost," she was determined she would get out of that circle without getting caught. She had tried it many a time before and failed; this time she was going to do it. She tiptoed, oh, so softly over the loose gravel to the edge of the circle. Then noiselessly she dropped down on hands and knees and, without a thought for her dress, crawled slowly between Ann and the girl next to her. She could hardly keep from giggling, it was so funny to be so close she almost bumped them and yet not to be discovered. Now she was right between them, now she was almost outside—now she was free and away she dashed to the spot she had long ago picked out as a hiding place for just such a time as this.

The folks in the circle waited—but nobody was caught, so they shouted, "Ghost Walk?" and when the "ghost" didn't answer they opened their eyes and—no Mary Jane was there!

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"I'll get her," shouted Ann, "I'll find her! I'll bet she got out on your side of the circle, Janny, she never could have passed *me!*"

"I'll find her myself," answered Janny, "but she never passed by me, she didn't!"

So they hunted, up and down the yard, around the bushes, by the doorway, everywhere they could think of. But no sign of Mary Jane did they discover. They hunted and they hunted till the gong sounded and they had to go into school again. But not a sign of any Mary Jane did they find. Was Mary Jane lost? Miss Treavor must be told so everybody could hunt, for something surely must have happened to a little girl who didn't answer the recess bell when it rang for school to begin.

Now it happened that some days before, when Mary Jane had first learned to play "Ghost walk" she hunted around the yard for a good place to hide—in case she ever succeeded in getting out of the circle so she *could* hide. She didn't want to hide among the bushes because that was the first place

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the children looked; she didn't want to hide in the doorway because that was against rules and if a child was discovered there by a teacher, the child had to go straight upstairs and stay the rest of recess. And there didn't seem to be any other place. But there was another hiding place—and Mary Jane found it. Around the corner of the building, on the side nearest the furnace entrance, there was a jog in the brick wall. And in front of the little niche made by this jog, boards left by some carpenters had been carelessly tossed.

"I could climb over the boards," Mary Jane had thought, "and hide down behind and nobody'd ever find me—ever."

So when her time came, and she really did get out of the circle without being caught, she didn't have to stop and hunt a hiding place; she knew exactly where she wanted to go.

But there was one thing Mary Jane hadn't figured on; one thing she didn't even think of as she crouched down behind her boards while the children hunted for her, hither and

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yon over the school yard. She hadn't thought that way off, 'round the corner and behind boards that way, she couldn't—*hear*. The sounds of playing and romping seemed so quiet, so quiet that they were hardly noticeable. She didn't hear the bell and she didn't even notice the sudden quiet when the children fell in line to march upstairs. She sat there, huddled in a snug little heap, and she laughed to herself about the joke she was playing on her mates.

To be sure the time *did* seem pretty long and she thought they were very stupid—but then—she never suspected that recess was over and —

Till suddenly there descended upon her a cloud of chalk dust! It powdered her face and dress and shoes and made her forget all about being quiet and jump up with a lively scream of fright.

Overhead she heard Miss Treavor's voice, exclaiming, "Whatever in the world!" And then, before she could quite get the dust out of her eyes and understand what had

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happened, Miss Treavor and two other teachers who had heard the scream, stood before her and the whole story came out. Miss Treavor tried not to laugh when Mary Jane told her she was hiding but she couldn't help it. Mary Jane looked so be-powdered and forlorn. But Mary Jane didn't mind the laughing because at the same time, Miss Treavor lifted her out from behind the boards and set her down in the cheerful sunlight.

"That *was* a good place to hide," the teacher admitted, "and you were a clever little girl to think of it. But I believe, dear," she added kindly, "that next time you'd better hide some place where you can hear the bell, even though you *are* more likely to get caught."

And Mary Jane promised that she would never, never hide in such a very good place again.

Mary Jane hated to go back into the school room all mussed and tumbled as she was, so Miss Treavor sent for Alice and the

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two little girls skipped home for a fresh dress and clean ribbons so Mary Jane could enjoy the classes.

When, a half an hour later, she came back, with the dark blue dress changed to a plaid gingham and the red bow changed to green, the children wanted to know where she had been and what had happened. But Miss Treavor wouldn't tell. And she had made Mary Jane promise not to tell, because that place was *such* a good hiding place that the teachers didn't want other folks finding it and hiding there to make trouble too.

But all of Mary Jane's school fun wasn't from trouble. That was just one day. Most of the time, she played without anything happening just as the other folks did. And all the time she made more friends and had a better time, till, when Betty came back from the country, she knew most everybody in her room.

She liked school so very much that the days slipped by one after another so fast a person could hardly count them—one day and another day and another day—just that

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way. Till one Monday morning when they went to school, Miss Treavor announced, "Do you boys and girls know what we are going to do to-day? We're going to start making Christmas presents. Because Christmas is only *three weeks away!*"

"Christmas!" thought Mary Jane, with a thrill of joy, "Christmas! Why, they *do* have Christmas in Chicago! I wonder what I'll get and what I'll do!"

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CHRISTMAS IN CHICAGO

CHRISTMAS in Chicago! When Mary Jane heard those words she had her first real pang of homesickness for the home she had left when they moved to Chicago. Would any Christmas anywhere ever be so beautiful as the Christmas in that dear home? She remembered the pine trees in the yard, loaded down with their wealth of snow: the glowing fire on the hearth with its Christmas-y smell from the pine cones that were saved through the year for the Christmas Day fire; the tree in the angle near the fireplace where the afternoon sun touched it into a blaze of glory; the party for the poor children that had been such fun to plan for—would anything in Chicago ever be half the fun of Christmas in the old home? But Mary Jane was soon to discover that Christmas doesn't need certain houses or fires or trees to make it perfect; that

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Christmas is made in folks' hearts and that wherever there is a Christmas heart, there will be a happy day—in village or city, the place makes no difference.

When she went home from school that afternoon and announced that Miss Treavor said Christmas was so very near, she found that mother wasn't even a little surprised.

"Why to be sure Christmas is coming," laughed Mrs. Merrill, "and here I've been waiting and waiting and *waiting* for you to talk about it till, actually, I thought I'd had to begin myself, if you didn't wake up pretty soon." And then everybody began to talk at once.

"Do they have trees in Chicago?" asked Alice.

"Are there any poor folks who would like parties?" asked Mary Jane.

"Is anybody coming to see us?" demanded Mary Jane.

"Here! Here! Here!" exclaimed Mr. Merrill, "one at a time, ladies, one at a time! If you doubt that there will be trees in Chicago, you should see what I saw this

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morning as I went down to work. A train load of Christmas trees—yes, sir!" (for he noticed the girls could hardly believe him) "a whole train load of trees. And I see by the paper this evening that a boat load has arrived, too, so there will be no shortage of trees."

"Then we can have one," said Mary Jane, with a satisfied sigh.

"And let's put it in front of this foolish little gas log," suggested Alice, "then we won't think about a real fireplace."

"And there are plenty of poor folks," said Mrs. Merrill, going back to Mary Jane's question, "only they will not be so easy to get together, as back at home. How would you like to take a Christmas party to some family instead of having a party at home as we did last year?"

The girls hardly knew what to say about that new idea so Mrs. Merrill explained further. "I telephoned to the Associated Charities this very day," she said, "and they gave me the names of a fatherless family in which there are two girls about your ages,

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and one boy. I thought we could plan a fine Christmas for them and then, on Christmas morning, take it over and surprise them."

"Oh, let's do that, mother," said Mary Jane happily, "then we'd be like a real Santa Claus only we'd be a morning Santa. May we do it, surely?"

"I thought you'd like the idea," said Mrs. Merrill, "so I got lists from the association as to just what was most needed. Alice, if you'll get a pencil and paper, we'll figure it all out."

Making plans was the girls' favorite way of spending an evening so they whisked the cover off the dining table, pulled up chairs for four and went to work list-making.

"Tom," began Mrs. Merrill, consulting her list, "hasn't a bit of warm clothing."

"Why couldn't I knit him a muffler and some mittens?" asked Mary Jane. "I remember how and I haven't knitted anything since the war stopped."

"Fine!" approved Mrs. Merrill, "I think I have enough yarn for the mittens and if

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you'll get it out of the drawer there we can wind it while we talk and it will be all ready for you to set up at once. You'll have to work hard and fast if you want to make a muffler and a pair of mittens before Christmas.

"Now then," she continued, looking at the list, "they have very few bed covers and the children get so cold at night."

"Why couldn't you make some covers, mother?" suggested Alice, "and let me make them each some flannelette pajamas like we wear—you know how toasting warm they are. And I have the pattern and I know I could make them all myself."

"That's a beautiful idea," approved Mrs. Merrill, "and I hadn't even thought of such a thing. When we get through planning, dear, you can get out your pattern and see how much material you'll need. Then, when I go up town to-morrow, I'll get it for you.

"And they need stockings," she continued, "and shoes—"

"Could any of 'em wear my good shoes

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that are too little?" asked Mary Jane eagerly. She had been greatly distressed about those "best" shoes that were so good, and yet were hopelessly outgrown.

"I think they'll be exactly right," said Mrs. Merrill. "In fact I picked out this particular family because I was sure we could find nice things for them among you girls' outgrown things and that, put with what we buy new, would make all the bigger Christmas for them.

"And about toys," she continued with the list, "the girls have never had a doll—"

"Never had—" began Mary Jane but she couldn't quite get the words out. Never had a doll. Never had a Marie Georgiannamore to love and care for and take riding in a beautiful cart. Never had—no, she couldn't quite imagine it.

After that there was no more reading off a list. Mary Jane and Alice began making a list of their own, of what those children were to have for Christmas.

"But," objected Mrs. Merrill, "you girls forget that things cost money—a lot of

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money these days. And you can't possibly buy all those things and get any Christmas of your own too."

"Humph!" grunted Mary Jane as she squeezed her face up tight in an effort to write, "then we won't have one of our own! Haven't we got Marie Georgiannamore and a cart and a nice house and warm clothes—and—everything?"

That settled it. There would be a tree and dinner and a lot of fun in the Merrill house on Christmas Day, but the presents were to go to their adopted family to make *their* Christmas one never to be forgotten.

If you have ever planned a Christmas for somebody who never, in all their lives had one, you will know something about the fun that Mary Jane and Alice had in the time that was left before Christmas. They were about the busiest girls in all Chicago! They hurried home from school and they worked Saturdays but, actually, as soon as they got one thing done they thought of something else they wanted to make or buy and they had to begin all over again. They made

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cookies and candies and dressed dolls, one for each girl, and made a complete set of covers and pillows and "fixings" for an adorable doll bed that Mr. Merrill made in the evenings. Alice had to work pretty hard to get the pajamas all finished in time for there was considerable work on each pair; but she got them finished and she could hardly wait till Christmas to take them over to their family.

Mary Jane finished the muffler and mittens though she *almost* had to knit while she ate—towards the last—it takes a good many stitches to make a muffler big enough for an eight year old boy. The muffler was a deep crimson and the mittens a warm shade of gray with three rows of crimson in the wrist end; Mary Jane had picked colors she was sure Tom would like.

At last the twenty-fourth of December came around—cold and snowy and just the kind of a day for making a Christmas. The trees were bought and set on the balcony, the turkeys, two of them, were in the pantry ready to dress and three big baskets were set

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on the dining-room table ready for packing.

"Now, then," said Mrs. Merrill, "if you have everything ready, I think we'd better pack all the things we can now, because when Dadah comes home there'll be plenty to do."

Mary Jane thought the packing was the most fun of anything she had ever done. They packed all the doll things in one basket, doll things and toys and three nice books. Of course the doll bed wouldn't go in the basket; it had to have a package all by itself. A second basket was for clothing, the pajamas—and no one would ever guess that a girl as young as Alice had made those charming garments—the muffler, the mittens, one pair for each child, warm underwear and a dress for each girl (one of the nicest of Alice and Mary Jane's outgrown frocks). Mr. Merrill had added a nice flannel shirt for Tom and Mrs. Merrill put in a warm sweater for the good mother.

"That's a basket they'll like to open," said Alice, proudly, as she tucked the brand new comforter Mrs. Merrill had made,

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around the top, "they'll be so happy they won't hardly be able to wait till they can put 'em on!"

The third basket was fully as interesting as the others. It was a big, big one and in it the girls packed groceries, cans of vegetables and soup and sugar—a very little bit to be sure for there wasn't much to be had, but the Merrills had decided to send exactly half of what they had—and oranges for breakfast and cereals and bread. Then on top, they were to put cookies and candy and the turkey. But of course those last things would go in in the morning, just before the baskets were taken away.

By the time Mr. Merrill came home, the three baskets were packed, covered up and set in the corner of the dining-room ready for morning.

"Now for the tree!" said Mr. Merrill as he took off his coat ready for work. He set their tree in the dining-room and with Alice's good help fixed a solid bottom standard and set it up in the living-room right in front of the foolish little fireplace. They wired it

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firmly and then Mrs. Merrill brought in the boxes of Christmas trimmings and everybody set to work.

Such fun as it was! Mary Jane kept saying, "Remember this!" And Alice added, "Remember that!" till it seemed as though it *couldn't* be more than a week since last Christmas when they had put the same things on a tree that looked exactly like the one they were now trimming. This year, seeing Mary Jane was such a *very* old person, she was allowed to put the gold star on the top of the tree; she climbed the ladder, with father holding one hand and wired it on all by herself; and Alice, as a special privilege, was allowed to hang the crystal icicles on every tip.

Nobody put any tinsel on the tree—that was left for the middle of the night like the story of the old time legend. Whether the spiders and the Christmas fairies, working together, really covered the tree with silver, Mary Jane never stopped to figure out. But at any rate the tree was covered with strings of gold the next morning and Mary

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This year, seeing Mary Jane was such a *very* old person, she was allowed to put the gold star on the top of the tree

Page 195

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Jane thought it the prettiest Christmas tree she had ever seen!

The very last thing before she went to bed, Mary Jane hung up her stocking. And Alice, looking a bit foolish, hung hers close by.

"I thought you two folks weren't going to have any Christmas," said Mr. Merrill teasingly.

"Of course we're not," said Mary Jane bravely, "but we want to hang our stockings just the same as if—you know." And Dadah must have understood for he nodded his head and didn't tease any more.

Nobody would say how it ever happened. Certainly it was well understood that there were to be no presents. But, anyway, when Mary Jane and Alice looked at those stockings Christmas morning they were fat, as fat could be! Just bulging over with queer shaped parcels!

Mary Jane couldn't even wait to put her slippers on! She bundled a kimono around her, grabbed up her stocking and ran into her mother's room to open it. Alice wasn't far

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behind and certainly for girls who were to have *no* presents, they fared very well indeed! Santa Claus must have got his signals mixed some way! There were doll things for Marie Georgiannamore, and a ring for Mary Jane; hair ribbons, handkerchiefs, skates for Alice (think of that in a stocking!) and slippers for the little girl who forgot to put on her old pair and, oh, many lovely little things that could be tucked into a stocking.

The girls spread the things out on mother's bed and had a happy time till suddenly Mr. Merrill exclaimed, "Girls! It's eight o'clock and I ordered that taxi for nine!"

Then there *was* a scramble! Gifts were hustled away, clothes were put on, breakfast was eaten and a few last things packed in the baskets, just as the taxi arrived.

It was fortunate Mr. Merrill had ordered a big car for with three baskets, a bundle containing the doll bed and another the turkey, to say nothing of the tree roped on the side of the car and the box of trimmings on Mrs. Merrill's lap even a big car was pretty full.

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Mary Jane felt like a real Santa Claus for sure!

The family they were going to see didn't know they were coming, so when the car stopped in front of a shabby little house, three puzzled and very sober faces pressed against the window and looked out. But the sober faces soon changed. In a few minutes the mother was helping Mrs. Merrill put the turkey in to roast, the older girl was helping Mr. Merrill set the Christmas tree in place and Tom and Ellen, the little girl, were helping the Merrill girls trim the tree.

When the Merrills left the house some two hours later the turkey was almost cooked, the tree was trimmed, presents unpacked and happiness and good cheer had settled down in the little house for many a day.

It was a good thing they came away when they did, though, for exactly as they drove up to their own home, they met an express wagon. And in their own vestibule they found the driver. "Family of Merrill here?" he asked them.

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"They're us," said Mary Jane eagerly. And whereupon the driver carried upstairs the biggest, fattest Christmas box Mary Jane had ever seen.

Of course it was from grandma and in it were so many lovely things from uncles and grandparents and cousins that Mary Jane thought she never would get everything unpacked!

"Well," said the little girl as some time later the family sat down to their own belated dinner, "I think for not having *any* presents, we got a lot! And I think I like Christmas in Chicago just as much as anywhere, I do."

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A SUMMER HOME AND A TELEGRAM

"LET'S go skating!" called Frances one cold morning as she saw Alice shake the bath room rug from the balcony.

"Skating?" answered Alice, "where?"

"Down on the Midway," said Frances. "As soon as you get your work done, you and Mary Jane come around to our front door and Betty and I will be ready."

"But Mary Jane doesn't know how to skate," said Alice.

"Betty doesn't either," answered Frances, "but they can take their sleds and coast down the sides of the bank while you and I skate."

Alice promised and then she hurried inside to finish her work. She had heard about the fine skating on the Midway where the park board flooded the sunken greens for the benefit of neighborhood children, but thus far the weather had been too mild for

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any skating, so she hadn't had a chance to try it. But a sudden cold snap, with snow enough to cover the sloping banks, had provided both skating and coasting.

Well protected with warm mittens and leggings the girls set out and had the jolliest kind of a morning. At one end of the ice, the younger folks did their coasting, the sloping sides giving a flying start and the smooth ice a glorious finish. At the other end the older boys and girls did their skating, so there was no mix up or interference.

That morning was the first of many happy Saturday mornings spent on the ice. Even Mary Jane got some skates and, with the help of Dadah when he could get away from the office, she learned to be a fine skater.

But winter fun never lasts very long. Just about the time Mary Jane learned to skate well enough to challenge Alice to a race, the spring sun sent the ice to nowhere land and the while-ago ice pond turned to green grass! Spring had come.

With the coming of spring, Mary Jane grew very restless. She wasn't sick, but

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something was wrong. Something was making her very solemn and sober—quite unlike her usual lively self.

"I know what's the matter with me," she announced one warm sunny morning, "I want to dig."

"You want to dig?" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill in amazement, "well, why don't you go down and dig in the Holdens' yard? You know Mrs. Holden said you might."

"But I don't want to dig in somebody's yard," answered Mary Jane, without a spark of interest, "I want to dig in my *own* yard and have flowers and a sand pile and everything right in my own yard, I do."

Mrs. Merrill didn't reply but she did do a lot of thinking and that evening she and Mr. Merrill had a long conference.

As a result, at breakfast table the next morning Mr. Merrill said, "How would you girls like to have a summer home of your own? A place in the woods where we could go as soon as school closes and where you could wear bloomers and play in the sand and gather flowers and make garden and all

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the things you love to do but can't do in the city. How would you like that?"

Mary Jane and Alice stared at him. Would they *like* it? anybody could see by their faces that they would *love* it!

"But we wouldn't want to leave you here in Chicago, all summer," objected Alice.

"And I wouldn't want to be left," Mr. Merrill assured them. "But I am sure, somewhere in the suburbs around Chicago there must be *some place* we could get a summer home. And we'll make it our business to find that place."

"I thought," began Mrs. Merrill, and then she hesitated.

"Something nice?" asked Alice, encouragingly.

"It would have been nice," admitted Mrs. Merrill, "but likely we couldn't do it. I'd been thinking how pleasant it would be to take another trip this summer. You know how you girls enjoyed going to Florida. And you remember Uncle Hal graduates from Harvard this June. I had been won-

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dering if we could go east in time to be there when the festivities are going on."

"Oh, mother!" cried Mary Jane, "what fun! I do want to ride on a train, a big train with a sleeper and a diner! But then I want to dig, too," she added, insistently.

"Then we'll take one thing at a time," suggested Mr. Merrill. "We'll look into the question of a summer home—we know we'd all like that. And you folks don't know that a very popular uncle would *want* a grown up sister and two small nieces hanging around at commencement time," he added teasingly.

"How do you find a summer home?" asked Alice thoughtfully.

"That's what we'll have to discover," laughed Mr. Merrill. "And we'll begin this very Saturday afternoon if the weather is fine. We'll take a suburban train and ride till we see a place that looks homey and there we'll get off and hunt."

The next Saturday was warm and sunny, the kind of a day for bringing flowers into

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bloom and for making little girls want to play out of doors. Mrs. Merrill and the girls met Mr. Merrill at his office so as not to lose a minute's time, and they hurried right over to the station, and got aboard the first suburban train they could find.

"I think this is lots of fun," said Mary Jane as they found their seats, "we don't know where we're going—we're just going!" And the train was off.

For some time the girls were really discouraged. They passed factories, and tenements, and more factories till Mary Jane was sure they were never coming to country—real country. But suddenly, when she was about to give up, the factories were gone and from the window the girls could see wide fields and strips of woods and an occasional brook. Two or three little stations were passed and then the train ran through a beautiful stretch of woods—rolling woods all leafy and budding and flower decked. The ground was fairly covered with early blossoms and trees of wild crab were just bursting into pink bloom.

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Mary Jane grabbed her coat and started down the aisle.

"Make 'em stop the train, Dadah," she said, "this is where we want to live!"

Fortunately at that minute the train really did stop at a small station and the Merrills got off and looked around. It didn't take long to explore into the woods far enough to find that they had come to the very place they were looking for—a spot not too far from the city for Mr. Merrill's daily trip and yet wild enough to give the girls some real woods. The girls picked flowers as they explored and had such a happy time that it was hard work to persuade them to go back to the city when the twilight came. But they had found the very place!

Three weeks later Mr. Merrill bought a lot in the heart of the woods, and the summer home was no longer a mere dream—it was to be really truly.

"Now," announced Alice, "we'll draw the kind of a house we want. I love to draw plans of a house!" She cleared off the dining table, sharpened pencils, brought two

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tablets and insisted that everybody come out and help.

And just then the door bell rang.

"Telegram for Merrill!" shouted a voice through the tube and Mary Jane pressed the buzzer in a hurry—a telegram usually meant something exciting.

It was addressed to Mrs. Merrill and said, "Have all tickets and hotel reservations. You and the girls must come." And it was signed by Mrs. Merrill's brother.

"If that isn't just like a college boy!" laughed Mrs. Merrill. "For weeks he doesn't answer a letter and then he telegraphs! Girls," she added, "let's go! Wouldn't you like to go to Boston and see the college and the ocean and the White Mountains—and—everything?"

"Oh, mother, *really?*" exclaimed Mary Jane. (She felt as though she must be dreaming, things were happening so fast!)

"But what about the summer home?" asked Alice.

"Don't you worry about the summer home," Mr. Merrill assured her, "we'll have

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that summer home just the same. You girls take your trip east. You won't be gone more than a couple of weeks—and what are two weeks out of a whole summer? And before you go, we'll get the shack all planned and when you come back we'll move out."

"Goody! Goody! Goody!" cried Mary Jane happily, "then I can see Uncle Hal and ride on the train and dig a garden and *everything!*"

And if you want to hear all about Mary Jane's beautiful trip to Boston and the White Mountains, the fun she had sight-seeing and the jolly party on "Class Day," you must read—

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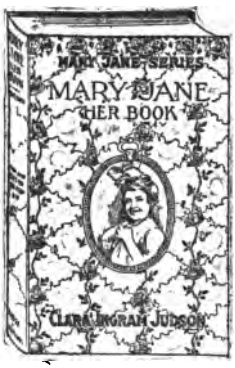

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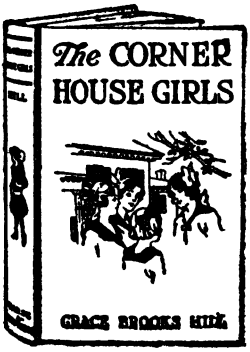

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